

FLOOD-TIDE



SARAH P. McLEAN GREENE

ALBRIGHT COLLEGE
LIBRARY



PRESENTED BY
Mr. William G. Hintz

FLOOD-TIDE

By
SARAH P. McLEAN GREENE

Author of

"Vesty of the Basins" "Stuart and Bamboo"
"Cape Cod Folk"



RELEASED BY
ALBRIGHT COLLEGE LIBRARY

NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
MCMII

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

STUART AND BAMBOO. A Novel. iv., 276 pp.
Post 8vo, \$1 25.

THE MORAL IMBECILES. A Novel. iv., 237 pp.
Post 8vo, \$1 25.
Full of quaint humor and subtle pathos.

VESTY OF THE BASINS. A Novel. iv., 271 pp.
Post 8vo, \$1 25.

NEW ILLUSTRATED EDITION. From Photographs
by CLIFTON JOHNSON. Crown 8vo, \$2 00.

*No book of American life and character study of this
decade merits new editions more than this inimitable
study of fisher-folk.*—Sunday-School Times.

NEW YORK AND LONDON :
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS.

Copyright, 1901, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

All rights reserved.

813.46
G812f

96455

TO ONE
LOST
WHO WILL BE
FOUND AGAIN

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE EASY PATH OF THE SAINTS.	1
II. AN INSUFFICIENT IDEAL	5
III. GAMBLING	13
IV. ALPENA	19
V. FAITHFUL TO FORMALITIES	26
VI. INFRA	36
VII. DINSMORE AND THE WHALE	43
VIII. REMEMBERING SALEM	55
IX. UNDER A TOPIC	63
X. CONVERSATION HEARTS AND AN EXPLO- SION	73
XI. "LET THAT SHEET OFF!"	83
XII. LEE SHORE	90
XIII. A CRUEL BUOY	97
XIV. DARING THE HAUGHTY	105
XV. STEERED BY THE WICKED MAN	115
XVI. HARISSEMENTS	122
XVII. AFTER THE RED LIGHT	133
XVIII. BY THE MOONLIGHT	138
XIX. ZEKE'S ENLARGEMENT	141
XX. DESPAIR AND MY WHITE LADY	153
XXI. THE WEDDING OF THE FOUR-POLE JUMPER	162
XXII. PLOTTING BY THE NARROWS	174

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
XXIII. THE WARRIOR AND APOLLO	186
XXIV. THROWIN' WATER	193
XXV. THE CRUISE TO THE FAIR	203
XXVI. EVERYWHERE SELL AN EVIL SPIRIT	215
XXVII. A HOUSE-WARMING	228
XXVIII. SUBMISSION. THE CAPTAIN'S BOUQUET	242
XXIX. THE SMILING CLOCK	250
XXX. "HER VOICE WILL NEVER LEAVE ME"	261
XXXI. AUNT NAG'S DUCK	273
XXXII. LOOKING AT OURSELVES ON THE TREE	282
XXXIII. THE SAILING CAPTAIN	294
XXXIV. "WOE! WOE!"	303
XXXV. THE FISHERMAN'S LOVE	308
XXXVI. SLIPPED MOORINGS	314
XXXVII. THE SONG OF THE BEEL-ISLANDERS	321
XXXVIII. HARL TRODDEN	326
XXXIX. "KILLED BY A PUNKIN"	333
XL. BY THE SHORE	338
XLI. HOPING	347

FLOOD-TIDE

FLOOD-TIDE

I

THE EASY PATH OF THE SAINTS



LEANED against Infra for strength, as once the weak had leaned upon me. She did not know the world; otherwise, I thought, she would not have had strength. She believed in God and the sweet spirit world, in holy deeds and their reward. She ate like a pirate three times a day. She laughed sweetly, but with inelegant heartiness; she walked with a substantial joy and faith in the stability of all things to defend and maintain her.

I was a maimed human being, with a heart that I could not make alive. God had left me. I clung to Infra because she was like an opiate to every bleeding nerve. I smiled through her. I slept when she was in the room.

"Marry me, Infra," I said. "I am bankrupt and faithless, a human wreck come again to your shore, a poor coward, above all. Will you marry me?"

"Yes. And will you belong to the saints?" said Infra, simply.

Now there were two sects at the Bar, termed re-

FLOOD-TIDE

spectively the "Advents" and the "Saints," and Infra was joined to the latter order.

"I—will be—a saint," I said, with an astounded, reckless laugh in my sleeve; "anything to please you, dear," and was conscious only of a surcease of pain as I laid my head against her arm.

Infra was at heart the most serious of mortals. She sent for Elder Lucas, who was sojourning at the Bar. He was a quaint, ignorant man, who would have much amused me in my merry days; but he christened me a saint, and with that new aureole about my name I rose and asked to be married to Infra.

So, having secured her, I began to inquire into my faith.

"The saints have never but one husband or one wife, Infra?" I said, jealously pale, for the world had well tricked me.

She gave me an indignant look; then her eyes filled with tears for my trembling weakness as I stood facing her.

"Never but one husband or one wife, Alfred."

"What else do I believe?"

"We're bound to be just like what Christ was, like the Christians at the beginning."

"Are we bound to be that?"

"Yes."

I drew her towards me. I had not laughed so merrily for long. I stroked her poor white wedding dress. "We are bound to be like what Christ was, and the Christians, at the beginning? And is that all, Infra?"

Laughter was genuine and good to Infra. She made no distinction between the bitter and the wholesome.

"I know it is an easy faith," she said, gravely; "still, we have to be always mindful."

THE EASY PATH OF THE SAINTS

I lifted her hand to my lips. "Take me sailing, Infra, by the moonlight. Drown me before you find out my qualifications for saintship. No, do not drown me. I believe I love you."

"Do I—do I make you at all as happy as that woman did who ruined you, Alfred?"

"Oh no, not as happy as that woman did who ruined me."

Infra paled, but she smiled, too. "Never mind, Alfred. Doing of our duty makes people happy."

I showed my wife no courtesy, sinking weakly in the stern of the boat while she put up the light sail. I shivered in an overcoat. The wind tossed the hair on Infra's uncovered head and blew her light gown open at the throat. She revelled in the summer night as a sea-bird might do, unaffrighted and unchilled.

I watched our path of light, the desolately wakeful shore, the clouds flying across the moon as to some vast appointment in the sky. Tossed between sea and sky, I turned to my bride with chattering teeth and grasped her hand.

"Your hand is warm!" I cried, amazed.

"I'm steering. You are not doing nothing."

"Dearest, say 'you are not doing anything.'"

"I'll be mindful."

"She talked excellent grammar—the woman who made me so happy. We soared to the heights of the purest English. How warm your hand is! Say 'You are not doing nothing,' Infra. I like that better. Can't you see I was only jesting?"

"Probably it will come natural enough, but I shall be mindful to talk as pleases you."

"Only say you'll not leave me, however ill and forsaken of all others, and crabbed and unlovable

FLOOD-TIDE

I am. Say you'll not leave me until death. Say that, *Infra*."

"I do not need to say that again."

I looked in her quiet face. I knew.

"No, you do not need to say it again. I ought to have had the courage to die, even to die painfully and alone—and I have taken your sweet life, like a puling infant; worse than that, like a weak coward."

Made in the form of a man, I covered my eyes with my hands and sobbed between my teeth.

"You could not be any higher to me than you are," said my bride, her soul glowing in the unvexed exaltation on her face; "remember, you're called to be a saint."

II

AN INSUFFICIENT IDEAL



HAD known that Margaret Langthorne might come again to the Bar. It was there I had first met her.

She had a profession, and that piqued my admiration too, being a poor fellow without brilliancy, an idler endowed only with this world's goods. But she gave me her word, and I dreamed—I lived in bliss. Sitting there by the sea, with her beside me, time was a flying thief who bore off the moments with purpose to defraud me.

“You are rather a pretty boy and a well-grown boy”—Margaret’s sighs were delicious, and, though I was older than she, her dark eyes held a weary, fascinating, maternal burden as though I had been the most troublesome of a family of seven—“what a pity that you do not know anything.”

Small odds it made to me! with the touch of her hand in my hair.

It was well that when, at the summer’s close, I followed my promised wife to her native town, some good was done before the trouble came to my fortunes. For I was able to help her worthy brother out of financial straits and had settled a small competence on her mother—all she would accept, and that unwillingly, at my pleading; for they were

FLOOD-TIDE

not base—they were proud people, of the highest conservative social position, brilliant, and more elegantly reared than I, and it was charming to be with them.

It was during the fever that fell on me—as, by old saying, the birds of misfortune never fly singly—that the house of my wealth fell, leaving me but the promise of a frail pittance. And still, like a selfish child, I rested in Margaret's love and that high speech of ours that had been, beside the brave waters of the Bar, "Closer, dearer for misfortune."

"I will work for you, love," I said, still blustering in purpose, though I clutched the mantel with a bloodless hand. "I will build our fortunes up again. I will—"

"*You* could never make money; and besides, my poor boy, you are a physical wreck from the fever. I should have prescribed for you personally, but I can never trust my own skill with those I love."

I clung to the mantel.

"We must realize the truth," she went on: "in that way I show you the truest love. You are a wreck, and I am thoroughly exhausted from my professional work of the past four years. I speak as a physician. You have friends—you must go to them. I myself am going away for a rest."

I staggered, but clung to the mantel with that quivering hand

"I cannot live without you."

"You are childish, Alfred. You are weak and childish. Have you no thought for me? I hoped for great moral strength in you." She lifted those beloved eyes—not to me, but as questioning a universe that denied her any realization of her ideals.

AN INSUFFICIENT IDEAL

"Why," she murmured, "why do I always fail to find that for which I seek?"

"You have not found that which you sought? Meg! Meg! Are you not mine? Am I dreaming? Help me! Come to me!"

"I am yours in the truest sense, not weakly. I am worn. I am not able, mentally or physically, to take the responsibility of your life."

"Oh, it is a small responsibility!" I cried. "To hell with your 'truest sense'!—to hell, where you have sent me! I want to get away from you! I want to breathe!—to breathe!—to breathe!"

It may be judged whether or not I was a heady soul, and one with whom it would have appeared tempting to embark on the journey of life! My passion pumped the little remaining vitality from my limbs and spread darkness over my eyes.

When I came to consciousness again I prayed that that interview might have been a dark dream.

"Forgive me, Margaret," I whispered, adoring her; "forgive me, love," and aloud I said, "Send for Margaret Langthorne."

"Dr. Langthorne has left town," said the nurse.

"Where?"

"She did not say, except that the doctor whom she had consulted about herself had forbidden her all correspondence."

"With me!"

"'With all,' she said."

I asked no more, staring. The medicine given me bore up to waves of thinner ether an already floating brain, and I asked no more questions.

But when at last I walked forth in the world again feebly, the cross over St. James's—so little of a man was I—was like a stagnant sign to me. The

FLOOD-TIDE

misery of the world had no end or aim; it was causeless cruelty on the one hand and brute suffering on the other. The revolver with which I had tried to end the pain of life had disfigured and not healed me.

I remembered the Bar: there was only one thing I loved now—the vivid restlessness of the ocean. It was my place, and they were my people by a summer friendship of years. If Margaret Langthorne came again, I should not mind. I should look at her only as the dead look. And they—they would not know my winter's story there.

But one's story seems always to be known, and they had somehow heard of mine, with tragic surprises and forlorn embellishments putting to shame even the poor, mad original. Infra knew it with the rest, and now on the night of our marriage she met the pounding waves with exaltation in her eyes, only because so poor a hero had been made one of the order of the saints!

Our little cottage was full of visitors when we came up from the beach.

"Infra"—they surrounded her—"you gone and got married without invitin' of us. Now you got to sing!"

They pulled her down before the little, sonorous parlor organ. She was a large, fair woman—a tender, inviting face that led us but a little way before we found the rock of purpose abiding there, immovable as the boulders against which we were wont to lean down by the shore.

"Oh, Infra, you might 'a' married anybody to the Bar, and Elder Lucas himself wanted ye; and to think that, all of a sudden, you should go and—"

There was a generous pause, for I was not much

AN INSUFFICIENT IDEAL

of a bridegroom to be sure, but I was there, in an obscure part of the room; so these heedless girls blushed and smiled on me kindly by way of reparation.

They opened the hymnal on the organ rack, for music was exclusively solemn at the Bar. Wedding march and funeral dirge breathed the same aspiration.

““ Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.””

I remembered Margaret's purely classical selections, her exquisitely trained voice, that in truth had some quality crowish and thin compared with Infra's contralto, born of the fearless tides.

“Wal', ye done it, 'ain't ye?” Grandpa Gleeson, from a neighboring house, asked me this question. “Ye gone and done it, 'ain't ye?” His chirruping tone and manner were not exactly malevolent, but they expressed a curious gloating over my condition and fate.

“Done what?”

“So ye never heered how the dragon was filled with wrath ag'in' the woman? Nor concernin' the four beasts and seven vials?”

Grandpa looked warily about; for while it was his province to have learning so profound that none might answer him, yet the Bar, suffering many years under his erudition, now regarded it but vaguely, at the best.

The “wreck” approached me. “Suppose ye've heered how I got my timbers shivered over to the ledges?” he asked, with his crazed laugh. He had drifted towards my corner of the room from the first, as something affiliated to me. The “wicked man” leered at me confidentially. Even the “fool” came and stood over me as a brother. These were my

FLOOD-TIDE

companions, and my head sank; for I had been abundantly merry and flattered in my day.

Infra, surrounded by the brightest of our guests, looked over to my disreputable corner, and the smile that embraced all fell on me.

There were a few pieces that she sang alone, because the Bar had not yet learned them; so she sang now:

“It is better life to suffer.

‘Be thou strong,’ I heard Him say.

‘Suffer well, for I have suffered—

Suffered—suffered, all the way.’”

Her rich voice went tender and low, and it flooded my very soul, not with emotion only, but with a sort of dawn, dimly understood. Through the window I could see a wreck of old days down on the beach in the moonlight—upright beam and one firm bar still withstanding the waves—making a cross—the cross of a wreck, not of a church spire. Dimly understood, but somehow it seemed to me of little consequence then whether I was thought much of, or even whether I was happy, so that I despised no service, even to the lowest.

Little Rue, waking from a fresh nap in her mother’s arms, ran over to me; for the children were there, too, and Rue’s new pink shoes had been admired by every one in the room save myself.

“Look at my chus!” she demanded.

She reached hardly to the level of my knees, and was a natural wonder to me—how so small a thing could walk and talk and hold a brain of complete dimensions.

“Look at my chus!” she repeated.

I lifted her with delight, standing both pink shoes upon my knee; but my attention was fixed solely

AN INSUFFICIENT IDEAL

on her wee, cherubic face, and her displeasure reached a towering climax.

"You look at my chus!" she cried, scowling upon me severely; but upon further contemplation of my face she softened enough to lift a stern, reproving finger and slowly trace away a tear from either cheek of mine. "You be dood and you shall have some new chus," she adjured me, with that tone of admonition which implies the truest sympathy.

When our visitors had all departed I followed Infra to the kitchen, where she was busy with some household duties.

"When we were sailing, Infra, you asked me if I loved you as once I loved Margaret Langthorne, and I answered, truly, 'No,' for, God knows, I love you infinitely more—and better."

A smile swept over Infra's downcast face, the unmoved rock of strength abiding there.

"Did I ask you that, Alfred?"

"What—what then?" I stammered.

"At least I was not thinking of that," said my quiet bride. "I was only wondering—hoping you might be happy."

"You're a sort of martyr then, taking pity on me?" I said, in a suffocated voice, for I was sick, and any step towards faith was like the tottering of the infirm. "You have never said you cared for me. How could you? I am a fool cumbering the earth."

I went to the door, but at the first step down I paused, looking towards the water and the night. Infra came presently and leaned both arms upon my shoulder, looking seaward:

"The wind's breezing in from the nor'ard. It'll blow before morning. Go down and see that the boat's safe to her moorin's, Alfred."

FLOOD-TIDE

She did not speak cajolingly or at all as if soothing a child, but with a quiet confidence and repose upon my care, just as physically she rested for support upon my shoulders.

Suddenly I was strong. I could have braved a thousand nights for her, and impetuously to do her bidding transcended every other thought.

"I cannot go, with you leaning upon me, love!" I said.

Infra laughed as she released me, and turned to enter the house.

III

GAMBLING



SO it came to pass that none had ever excelled me in newly married valor at the Bar. I kindled the fire and brought the water from the spring, while Infra prepared our breakfast. Then I went out to the wood-pile with axe and saw.

Praise is sweet, scorn and vituperation are bearable; but to be indulgently grinned at by the human form stretched at ease, or resting one foot on the wheelbarrow in passing, while the sweat is dripping from one's own brow, calls on the inmost resources of the saint.

"Hi! hello!" said Bayruck—the wicked man—"how d' do? Enj'yin' yer honeymoon, I see!"

"Perfectly!" I responded.

"Did ye ever hear how 't I asked Infra to have me, once, and—she was very soothin'—she said she felt as though the Lord's time for her to marry hadn't come yet. I suppose the Lord's time's got along all right now?"

Bayruck had a genial countenance, but the intelligence that gleamed from the black eyes behind his glasses was a warning to all simple believers.

I replied with a free swing of my axe.

"Ye got the best woman on the Bar," he continued,

FLOOD-TIDE

heartily. "All the same, I wouldn't make a dum fool o' myself tunkin' away on them old pine-knots, dullin' an' begrimin' yer axe. Why don't ye split up stove wood—ye got plenty lyin' there—and burn that old ruck in the fireplace?"

He was right, and, though it came from so equivocal a source, I made haste to profit by his wisdom.

"Infra 'll think all the more of ye," said he, "for showin' a little wit."

"Even if it is borrowed?" I inquired, cheerfully.

"Oh, wal', you ain't no sech terrible jackass as some makes out," Bayruck declared, with serious kindness, and withdrew his foot from the wheelbarrow; for he was one of those who had halted merely for a standing colloquy.

There were some who lay on the grass and criticised my labors from a vantage-point of the extremest leisure.

"Say, I want to tell ye in all kindness, ye want to be a little thoughtful how ye manage that axe. Ye jest come within a couple o' hairs' breadths o' choppin' off yer right foot."

"Ef ye're lookin' for yer saw, she's blown over there to east'ard and made fast ag'in' the hen-house."

The "fool" marched gayly past without comment or speculation, only turning to regard me from a distant outpost where he considered that his observation could occasion me no embarrassment. It was hard to think that the "fool" should have the tenderest manners.

Having mastered a provisional pile of fuel expressly large for the Bar, and unwilling to own myself panting, I departed into the house, took my overcoat, and slunk down to the beach, where, sunning among some uncompleted lobster traps, lay

GAMBLING

one who was ever my Isaiah in times of trouble. I stretched myself on a parallel line with him, some five feet away.

"Wal'," said he, not acknowledging my presence with any disconcerting haste, "here's hopin'!"

"Here's hoping! Captain Shale," I rejoined. For that was our word of greeting and of farewell at the Bar, morning salutation and evening curfew, when the sea moaned and light shone only from sparse cottage windows.

We dreamed in mutual content for another space; then: "Ain't ye rather tuckerin' yerself out with clo's?" said Captain Abram Shale, kindly, regarding my enveloped form from the corner of his eye with a sort of paternal amusement.

"I've been working up a pile of wood," I replied, "and got heated."

"The more heated ye be, the faster ye want to cool off." Captain Shale himself lay gratefully exposed to the breeze in a blue calico shirt, his trousers, as usual, freely saturated with brine; his feet tolerated some carpet slippers of which the original design in moss-roses was still feebly existent.

"I hope to be able more and more to do without clothes," I said, enviously.

"Ye've no idea of the sea of harissments that 'll roll off of ye," said Captain Abram Shale, "when ye cease to be harissed about clo's. Above all, I thank God 't I got out o' the impiety and the thraldom o' Sunday clo's. Ye may ransack my house, from garret to cellar, and ye won't find ary suit o' Sunday clo's."

I knew that this veteran of the seas had given always of his goods to whomsoever had need, and the weak he had defended ever, and I gazed at him

curiously; for he was altogether an incident of majesty, his great height so unassuming as to seem indeterminate, his eyes the human sea where the tempest has died, his bush of hair surmounted by a boy's hat, flat, round, and characterless, but upon him this small object offered no suggestion of caricature; it was as if some little wash from the ocean of time had landed naturally on the summit of sublimity.

"What—what has set you so against clothes?" I asked.

"The clo's-fever has set me ag'in' 'em."

"The clothes-fever?"

"The world's a-dyin' of clo's. So fur as I can see, the sons o' men is pretty much all a-strugglin' for one kind and another o' clo's—jest clo's; that's what it amounts to. I had two sons 't I sent away to be eddicated: one on 'em died in San Francisco strainin' ter git himself a certain perlitical suit o' clo's 't he wanted, and the other died in New York tryin' ter keep his wife and darters in church an' serciety clo's. Perlitical ambition, serciety ambition, this worl's fashion—what is it all, I ask ye, but clo's?"

I loosened a little the great collar about my throat and the salt wind seemed friendly.

"Still," I said, tentatively, "we need them."

"Sartin, we need enough to have our nakedness decently covered," said he, leaning over and secur-ing with the ribbons of lasting which were fastened to them the dim moss-roses about his feet; "but somehow I never see no sense in spendin' my life scrabblin' jest to get tergether a mess o' clo's. Sunday, specially, the world over, 's got to be pretty much a milliner's windy. Now I consider 't this old gear I

GAMBLING

got on, 't I pursue my industries an' meet my neighbors in through the week, 's jest fit for the inspection o' God Almighty on the Sabbath day. Ef I got a black heart, I ain't go'n' to git on no Sunday togs but what He'll see through."

Captain Shale's head sank back once more upon his pillowing arms, and the carpet slippers, toes upward, frankly faced an observing firmament; his color-dimmed but all-knowing eye seemed to scrutinize even the sun's rays familiarly.

"The's another thing," he continued, very gently, "'t perhaps I'm to blame for, but so 'tis: I ain't, and I never was, a mite skeered o' God! Fact is, I've allas felt kind o' frien'ly to Him.

"Of course," he added, "I shouldn't want this to git spread around on the Bar."

"I understand," I said.

"Yes, and the's this much more to it; though I'm frien'ly to 'arth, yet I never see nothin' in it ter cause me ter stand an' haggle when my call comes. I've allas reckoned 't there was latitudes we got no present chart of—and I'm calm an' consentin', when the call comes, jest ter weigh anchor an' go."

The tide murmured the same awful confidence at our feet. "Ready to go at call, and not afraid of God." Here was sympathy, and news to be kept from the cavilling of the Bar.

My great-coat had been growing heavy, and I squirmed out of it. The captain smiled. "Would ye like to gamble a little while?" he said. This evil term, though dark in suggestion, was pure in significance, for Captain Abram Shale never staked or won so much as a pebble-stone through any game of chance. It was his good wife, Sylphy, who had imbued him with the sense that his beloved game of

FLOOD-TIDE

euchre smacked warningly of dissipation, and it was only through respectful marital courtesy that we treated this pastime as damnatory and roguish.

He took from his pocket that familiar pack of cards every particular one of which had been so marked by accident or time that its precise denomination was as well known to us by its back as by its face.

"Sylphy says she don't object to my gamblin'," said he, "if she's right up close to my elbow. She says a wife ought allas to be spang up ag'in' her husband's elbow when he's a-gamblin'."

"Infra allows me to gamble anywhere," I remarked.

"Wal', yes—ye're both on ye the same perfession; but I've allas been a saint, ye see, and Sylphy's allas been a advent, and that keeps up a little rumpus, more or less, like being out on the open. The' ain't nothin' land-locked about it when a saint joins on to a advent. Ahem!"

He left me behind the pile of lobster traps where we had secured our cards from the wind, and, ascending the bank, took a discriminating glance along the path which led to his cottage.

"Time and old age 'll overtake us, ef nothin' else don't," he observed, cheerfully, as he returned with clandestine relish to our game.

IV

ALPENA



It was through a tacitly acknowledged triumph of diplomacy—visibly holding a preponderance of trumps—that I had lost the game to Captain Shale, when we were suddenly aware of a shock of white hair and a boy's emotionless blue eyes gazing steadily at us.

"Say!" said he; then: "Aunt Sylphy says if ye want to gamble to come along up to the house and gamble. She says Uncle Abe ought to be haulin' in his traps. She says Cap'n Alfred ought to be settin' out some traps—she says he's a married man now."

"For crabs' sakes!" said Captain Abram Shale, studying the boy with resigned marvel, "you *be* everywheres! In course we might 'a' known ye'd appear. Wal'," he sighed, packing up the cards and consigning them to his pocket, "it's all right, little Everywheres. Ye can go an' make a ha'ntin' sperrit o' yerself somewheres else."

But this singular exponent of the pursuing shades held us with his expressionless stare till we emerged from our covey behind the traps; then his bare black feet disappeared.

And I—I blessed him. "Captain" Alfred! *Cap-tain* Alfred! New words. Not a saint only, but a

FLOOD-TIDE

new-made captain, too, salty and profound, whose home was on the surges of the deep!

I found the pipe in the pocket of my discarded overcoat, and lit it with the thoughtful leisure of those to whose ilk I had just been appointed. After the same method I purchased some "lobstering gear" of Captain Shale, and set seaward with my boat full of traps.

But my knowledge of this craft had hitherto been from the tranquil post of observation. I was not yet strong from the fever, and the battle that I had with my task that day no mortal ever quite knew.

"I was for sendin' some o' the boys out to ye," said Dorna, Infra's half-cousin, who stood waiting with her by the shore as I rowed desperately in, "but Infry wouldn't let me. She said you'd manage all right."

My wife was exceedingly pale; her eyes shone and her head was up. Her man—her captain—to be sent out for and towed in like an incompetent! My tottering limbs stiffened, my shoulders squared themselves, and I laughed contemptuously.

Such a look my bride gave me!

"I've allas said," continued Dorna, scrutinizing me frankly with a grave and loyal face, "'t I believed the' was somethin' to ye, ef ye *did* bow and tilt yer hat and heave the door open for women folks to pass in. Ye've done more to-day 'n all the rest o' the great lazy buzzards on the Bar. Zeke's curlew's blowin' over to the Narrows, an he'll be here in an hour; he's allas hungry as the bottomless pit, an' I got to whip home an' get his infillin' ready. So here's hopin'!"

"Here's hoping!"

Infra served me my "infilling" as I lay on the

ALPENA

lounge. Then I slept, and, waking, called her name. She brought her sewing work and sat beside me.

"I'm going to lay a weir to-morrow for the her-ring, Infra. I've bought the stakes of Captain Abram, and Harl will help me set the nets."

"She is coming to the Bar, Alfred."

"Who?"

"Dr. Margaret Langthorne."

"Oh—oh yes—and I shall have to haul my traps. Zeke said he'd pay a dollar ten a dozen for lobsters, and they'll bring more later in the season."

"It isn't probable that she knows you are here. But do you forget her so soon, Alfred? I do not want you to forget her. She is poor and ill, they say."

"What can we do?"

"I know what I've always wanted to do with Margaret Langthorne. She's educated and haughty looking, but whenever I've seen her I've wanted to lay her down and feed her milk and sing 'Bye-low' to her till she got rested. Her eyes always looked as though she was seeking for something."

"And so she is—for an earthly ideal, sweetheart."

"She has found him—so they say: a man coming over to the Reach to board near her, to continue such courting of her as he has already begun. He is a great man, it's told—a great doctor, rich and famous."

Infra spoke very gently, with averted face to shield me should I make any show of pain. "I wanted to tell you myself, Alfred, so as not have you meet with any surprise."

"What I cannot understand—what I cannot understand, Infra, is, if she is coming here under such happy auspices, why you should feel like nursing

her and singing 'Bye-low' to her. Surely she cannot be 'seeking' any longer now."

Infra's thought was grave and pitiful, and it was too deep to parley words in any light sense. "She will be always seeking, Alfred, till she joins the saints. I wish that she and Alpena both would join the saints."

I gave an involuntary boyish snort of merriment. "I thought I was enough to break the order, Infra. It seems it will stand something more. Margaret Langthorne and Alpy Marlow, too! Saints! Ahem! A glittering trio!"

But Infra was too much in earnest to heed the trifling interruption.

"It is such an easy thing," she said.

"For some."

"No—for any. If it was to serve and get reward and thanks for it, we should be always fretting; but 'tis only just to serve—no more."

"Why, to be sure, any can do that," I murmured, answering like an astounded child the faith in my wife's sweet face.

"Alpena—'tis natural to the young—was more for winning than serving. Harlan and Arch have both looked to her ever since she was a child. You know what they are—no flesh-and-blood tie between them; they're sworn together as if it was religion. Both knew the other loved Alpena, and as they got older their faces got solemn when they looked at her. Then this Dr. Langthorne came and told her she was throwing herself away to mind either of them, or any of the people here. If Dr. Langthorne touched her shoulder, Alpy would follow her—but it seemed to give her no content."

"Hush! she is coming," I said, at sight of a slen-

ALPENA

der figure in the lane, "sweet, injured, tragic, as usual."

Alpena was our beauty. "Handsomer than flesh and blood ought to be" was the superlative comment of the Bar in general. She came in and, taking a chair close to Infra, put her head down on her shoulder, with only melancholy observance of the clock at the far end of the room.

"Infra," she sighed at length, "I'm getting to be an old woman. I'm twenty-one."

"Nonsense, darling. I'm thirty, and I'm young."

"Younger far than I."

"You're not old just because you have gloomy fits, Alpy."

Alpena rubbed her charming head against my wife's shoulder, as caressing one slow of intelligence but good for comfort, and so, spiritually refreshed, she lifted her tall form and stepped daintily into our pantry. There was a distant relationship among us all at the Bar that made these acts natural, but the particular choice selection immediately made by Alpena moved me to exclaim with ready playfulness:

"Stay! If you're hungry, eat some bread and butter. That is my pie—my dessert—that Infra set away for me until I should be rested."

Miss Marlow treated me only to a slight, scornful grimace as she continued devouring this special luxury. I rose and was for throwing a sofa cushion at her, but Infra intercepted my uplifted arm.

"Pshaw!" said Alpy. "Infra's on my side, and she could throw two of you. Sick baby! Sick baby!" the gentle damsel taunted me.

"Swan of the Narrows! Six-by-one panel Christmas card!" I retorted, an epithet always produc-

FLOOD-TIDE

tive of wrath to Alpena's soul. Infra reached up and boxed my ears, and Alpy's eyes shone with pleasure.

"I'll lock you both in the pantry," I said, and struggled with Infra, who had the firm muscle of the Bar women. Vigorous and prolonged was our pow-wow over the kitchen floor, Alpena making a Roman audience—and one other, the shock of white hair and emotionless blue eyes of Johnny Bowles suddenly framed in the doorway.

"There! Ye done it. Ye got 'em both in!" he exclaimed, with grave masculine sympathy as I banged the door to. "Ain't ye go'n' to lock it?"

"No. I will be victorious but not malicious, little Everywheres. And now I suppose you will go and spread it around on the Bar that my wife and I have been quarrelling?"

"No, for ye wa'n't," said Johnny, sadly; "ye was only foolin'."

"Your brain is quick and needs allaying, Everywheres. Here, take this dime and go buy yourself some peppermints."

"I'd ruther have 'conversation hearts.'"

"They are more variously and keenly flavored, I know, but you are too young to deal in those."

"I don't give 'em to the girls," said Johnny, with pathetic sincerity; "I eat 'em myself."

My wife and Alpena emerged from the pantry at this juncture, carrying themselves with their usual dignity.

"Some 'd kept ye in there," exulted Johnny, stonily regarding them, "but Cap'n Alfred's too per-lite."

"'Captain!'" screamed Alpena, with mirth.
"'Captain!' Captain Saint Alfred!"

ALPENA

My wife had resumed her sewing with an unvexed smile.

"I congratulate you on your new and exalted position," said Alpy, courtesying profoundly to me, which Johnny took for earnest, and did not wish me elevated in my feelings too far.

"He's got a scar, though," he observed, unflinchingly; "how'd ye git it, Cap'n Alfred?"

"I was bled of a malignant fever, Johnny," I answered, flushing. "If you feel that you must go, we can perhaps spare you—"

"Say, cap'n, I run in to tell ye there's a letter for ye up to the post-office. Rigdon called yer name three times, then Corinne took it an' went into the house with it."

"Where did she put it?"

"In the parlor between the big sea-shell and the wax fun'ral wreath."

"Let it lie there in pure and reposeful company until I call for it. I thank you. Hast thou any other news, O thou who art everywhere?"

Solemnly disdaining my light air, the soiled feet turned and fled.

V

FAITHFUL TO FORMALITIES



WAS making a fair beginning, becoming two dollars richer with each passing day, but I bethought me at last to go to the post-office.

I took formal and affectionate farewell of Infra, not because this bourn was remote geographically, but because it was such an indefinite rendezvous in point of time and dalliance. Infra was sturdily a domestic woman and disdained gossip. Not so I. And first I overtook Captain Shale returning from the spring.

"Wal'," said he, "ye find me pursuin' my industries as usual." He was carrying two brimming pails, and he had a notable gait: one foot advancing as if heroically to touch the shore of some unknown continent; the other, weighty with the instincts of philosophy, slowly lingering to ponder—not to fear—such proud adventure. He occupied the middle rut in the road, and hence, as we advanced, with each step that he took he deluged my companionable boots with water.

"Yes, ye find me pursuin' my industries. Wal', here's hopin'!"

"Here's hoping, Captain Shale. You're—ahem!—you're losing quite a flush bit of water, captain."

"Oh no, I ain't," said he, reassuringly; "we ain't

FAITHFUL TO FORMALITIES

so snug with the elements of God down here to the Bar but what we can let 'em slop over a little!" And with entire unconsciousness this large soul dealt another swash to my shrinking insteps.

"Where ye goin'?" he asked me.

"To the post-office."

"Sartin. I forgot 'twas Friday. Wal', Sylphy was naggin' around there for a spell in the spring while she was correspondin' with Mis' Temple."

"You like Mrs. Temple for a boarder? Is she writing anything now?"

"I don' know whether she's writin' a book or not. The' ain't no appearance o' her transcribin' anythin', and she don't strike me as a person 't 'u'd take the trouble to carry a mess o' truck around in her head. She's a plain, sensible creetur. I'm—ahem! —I'm r'al frien'ly with her."

"She will use you well then, if she does write you up."

"Accordin' to the compliments she gives me," said Captain Abram, smiling, as he unknowingly flushed a renewed cataract over my feet, his own moss-rose slippers wandering high and dry in the middle of the road, "accordin' to the compliments 't I hear everywhere o' her givin' me, I guess I ain't got nothin' to fear. At first, when Sylphy was set on havin' her—you know what women folks is when they git to anglin' for a boarder—I kinder hung back. 'Like as not she'll put us in a book,' says I.

"'Ef she puts me in a book,' says Sylphy, 'some words 't I been throwin' around on rocky sile may git spread to where they'll take root; and as for you, Aberm,' says she, 'I love ye and am faithful to ye, but ye're the oddest thing 't God ever set himself down in pitch darkness, after a hard day's work,

FLOOD-TIDE

to try to put together by feelin', ' says she, ' an' you needn't worry any about bein' put in a book; she wouldn't touch of ye,' an' Sylphy laffed."

"Sylphy r'a'ly wuships the ground I walk on," added the captain.

"I know she does," said I.

"She 'ncourages me to entertain Mis' Temple—poor creetur'; ye know they say the reason why she's allas hangin' around the coast here some'r's is because she lost somebody that she's hopin' ag'in' hope may turn up; anyways, when I git to tellin' any story o' a wrack, her countenance changes an' she looks as though she was settin' down to the gospel. She's a poor, interestin' creetur' and I—ahem!—I'm r'a'ly taken up with her serciety."

Captain Shale had not invited me into the house for euchre. Once he would not have allowed me to pass without that courtesy.

"She gambles with you?" I inquired with a jealous pang at the heart.

"Yes, we gamble—'specially evenin's. Sylphy sets spang up ag'in' my elbows, of course. Won't ye come in an' watch the game some time?"

"Thank you. I will," I said, accepting oblivion with a meek spirit, and proceeding on my way with oozing boots, while the captain, bearing diminished pails, turned into his own home lane.

It was a trifle embarrassing as I approached those two preconcerted groups attendant on the post-office, for I was late, although the buckboard bringing the mail was not due yet for an hour. I sat down on the men's side of the lane, the fair sex occupying in a like easeful position the greensward opposite. Such was our custom, this strict separation of the sexes ob-

FAITHFUL TO FORMALITIES

taining only until the mail carrier arrived, when we mingled again in normal friendly intercourse.

"What ye all dawdlin' here for, anyway?" said Bayruck, the "wicked man," stretched at full length in our masculine midst. "Mail never brought ye anything, an' never will."

"I know it," said Captain Nudd, "but we fit away like wil' boars, with the devil and the women folks houndin' us on, ter git a post-office, an' Rigdon spliced up a coffin-crate an' set it up on eend, with a hole to hand the letters through, an' now, as fur as my attendance goes, I'm go'n' to have it look as though the Bar was doin' some letter-writin', by gum!"

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen!" we said, approvingly, even giggling a little, as the virile nature may when in communion with its own sort.

"I *did* git a letter once," said Ziba Skank, with only moderate exultation, "from my wife's brother out in Nebrasky, askin' me to lend him fifty dollars."

"All 't I ever got," said Captain Fyryards, "was one o' these sassaprilla circulars. It offered a prize o' five hundred dollars, or somethin' like that, to anybody 't could die after takin' it. I didn't want it. I ain't soured on existence, but I'm perfectly willin' to fade an' flicker out along o' folks in general."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen!" we murmured in ecstasy.

"Wal', now, I outdone ye all," said Bayruck. "I got a reg'lar letter from a firm in New York sayin' if I'd send fifty cents for a pound o' tea they'd send me a reclinin'-chair an' a stem-winder an' a life-size pictur' o' Niagra Falls along with it. I wasn't long answerin'. I told 'em I got my tea over to the Crumples', an' I was too busy to recline, an' I reck-

FLOOD-TIDE

oned the time o' day by the sun; all I wanted was the life-size pictur' o' Niagra."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen!"

"That was six months ago, but I'm lookin' for Niagra in to-day's mail. A pictur' o' that size 'd naterally be a good while on the road, ye know—Hello! there comes little Dunbar over from Reef Point. Now, that's a stylish mount! They say he keeps six hired folks over to his summer residence."

"He's harder 'n nails, though," said Captain Nudd, drearily, from an unmoved elbow. The company in general displayed little interest. Dunbar, who had ridden far, fastened his horse to a random staple on the post-office—which had been constructed out of odds and ends of sea-timber—and came towards us.

"Post-office won't hold that hoss, I tell ye," said Fyryards; "he's swayin' o' her out o' plumb now. Fust ye know, she'll keel over an' Rigdon inside of her, and ye'll have somethin' of a touse to settle with the gov'ment. Go and make fast over to a tree."

With a hot flush, not quite knowing how far he was guyed, Dunbar appropriated this advice. Then, in gaiters and corduroy, he strode down the lane and actually stepped over into the rut on the feminine side.

"Is the post in, Miss Marlow?" he questioned of Alpena, with a trained English accent.

Alpy had been having her hair washed, a luxury she often enjoyed at the hands of the admiring Bar women, and the haughty young lady herself was now drying it, lifting and spreading it with her long, thin fingers. She simply lifted her eyes to Dunbar, unanswering. To be thus approached and addressed by him was not flattering.

FAITHFUL TO FORMALITIES

"Beg pardon. Is the post in, Miss Marlow?" Alpena gave her hair another toss. Dunbar flushed as he looked at its wonderful meshes: black it was, with moods of heavy sleeping gold. As she lifted it now its sullen darkness took on this sleeping tint. Her black, black eyes smiled faintly with insolence.

"Will you do me the honor," persisted Dunbar, angry and wholly fascinated, but sweeping his hat to the earth, "to tell me if the post is in?"

"Yes," called the "wicked one," from our side, "the posts are all in and the rails to fit 'em. Can't ye see? Come over here, Tyrolese Dunbar, where ye belong."

Receiving no answer from Alpena, the young man stalked over to our group. "Is there any reason why the ordinary civilities of life are to be omitted on this occasion?" said he with easy contempt, thrusting his hands in his pockets, and standing with small but firmly planted legs in our reposeful midst.

"Won't ye set down—or lay down?"

"Thank you. I'm not a lizard."

"Ye're a snake, though, from the way ye treated Jim Batson's girl over to the Ridge," said Nudd, irrepressibly. "Put that in yer pipe and smoke it."

Instead of which, Dunbar smoothly lit a cigar, and, taking up a position in the lane with his face averted from both groups, gazed in the direction whence the mail should appear.

Poor Earle—the fool—thought that Dunbar was showing off his clothes, which were of a novel and interesting pattern; and wearing, himself, on post-days, a rakishly green-checked costume of sack and trousers, which had been transmitted to him many seasons

FLOOD-TIDE

before by a sport transiently visiting our shore, he felt that he, too, had a duty to perform in this line.

So he stepped confidently out to Dunbar's side, and, assuming a like pose in every careful particular, stood as though they two formed, in the happiest sense, a cynosure for admiring eyes.

We saw Dunbar's ears flame: he moved a few steps onward. Earle, with the simplicity of faith, did the same. Hushed mirth grinned on many a face.

"'Bookwriter' over there 'll git a two-vollum novel out er us this summer," said Fyryards, in a stifled voice, "ef she takes in all the sittuwations."

But I noticed that Mrs. Temple did not even smile: she looked at Earle with kind gray eyes, in the way my Infra always regarded him, a sort of pitying tenderness on her serious lips.

"Bet ye, ef she was classifyin' 'em, ye'd be astonished to hear which she thought was the biggest fool," said Bayruck.

"Don't b'lieve she's no bookwriter at all," said Nudd. "She strams around in a pair o' big shoes as sensible as ef she went out to housework. Dunbar ain't mad nor nothin', is he!"

The situation, which was growing acute, was relieved by the arrival of the mail. In due time, Rigdon, from an aperture in the upright crate, called repeatedly the names of Mrs. Temple and of Tyrolese Dunbar. We listened with mild interest, no whit discomposed by the inconspicuous part we suffered at this stage of the proceedings. Mrs. Temple, with her hands alluringly full of letters, blushed with a sort of ingenuous apology as though she longed to distribute them among us. Dunbar was opening his insolently, the cigar in his mouth glowing.

Our sisters had now all come over to our side, and

FAITHFUL TO FORMALITIES

under a cheerful consciousness of duty done the usual interchange of friendly banter was going on, unimpaired by any sense of the apparent absence of motive or reward in our patient attendance on the formalities of the day.

The tall Alpena, who was rather inclined to lean upon some one, was making a convenient bench of Tilly's sturdy shoulder, her hair still drying. The blowzy complexion of our Bar women was not hers. She was exquisitely pale, a flush coming to her cheeks as rarely as the gold to her sombre hair.

Dunbar, tearing open his letters, stole keen glances at her. Her singular beauty, as well as some sense of elation at his own importance in all this comparative gloom of poverty and isolation, befuddled him as he strode towards his horse.

"You have a patrician foot, too, angel," he said, touching the hem of Alpena's skirt lightly—very lightly—with his whip. The girl darted towards the group of young fishermen standing near, as to a father, but Arch had already sprung forward and dealt Dunbar a blow that staggered him.

"I don't know the size of the angels over to New York," cried the fisherman, shaking his clenched fist, "but this is the dimensions of 'em, along here!"

"There's more, o' the same bigness, right by!" said Harlan.

"We ain't so dead as we look!" said Pearly, whose face was a blaze of health and color.

"I did not suppose it was necessary to bring a guard in coming here for my letters," said Tyrolese from between pale lips. He flicked his coat where Arch had struck him as though some soil might linger there. "I assure you, Miss Marlow, it was yourself alone whom I referred to as an angel, and a

FLOOD-TIDE

charmingly live one! Your father has done me the honor to ask me to call—I shall avail myself of that pleasure soon.”

Having struck Arch and Harlan this keener than any physical blow, he sprang easily to the saddle. His back was good, his hair barbered in a fashion marvellous to the Bar, and he rode his handsome horse well.

Alpena was a young woman whose moods and tenses we could not attempt to divine; we could simply admire. She did not turn to us now with sympathy, much less with gratitude. Harlan and Arch were looking silently at her; her eyes followed the horseman, a little dreamily—a dream under the cold power of reason, however. Villa gates, obsequious servants, a dinner of fat things, music and revelry—the girl’s full lips curled sullenly: to whom should these things belong of right but to her beautiful, graceful self?

Still, we could not divine, and we were rather pensive at the last.

Bayruck yawned. “When it clears up I shall sail,” he said. We had no deep reason either for calling Bayruck the “wicked man,” save that he was unmarried and the shore was dull to him.

“It looks smurry,” said Captain Fyryards; “but the moon’s so big she may hist up towards evenin’ and sweep the whole raft clean up there. Wal’, here’s hopin’!”

“So she may,” we answered. “Here’s hoping!”

I had gone some little distance thoughtfully on my way homeward when it occurred to me that, although omitted in this day’s distribution, a letter had been waiting for me between the big sea shell and the funeral wreath at Corinne’s. So I retraced my steps and obtained it.

FAITHFUL TO FORMALITIES

Strange news, as from the dead, it had for me. My fallen financial fortunes were by possible way of being retrieved, my worthless certificates of stock not so hopeless, perhaps. A gleam—not certain, but significant of renewed wealth, was before me. And I, in fact, regarded it wearily.

The voice of the sea was in my ears—my toil among the boats, the risk, the striving, the honest health, the dreamless sleep of nights, *Infra* at our cottage door. I tried to picture her among the forms of fashion that I knew, and smiled—she was serene above them all. I fancied that divine voice of hers swaying some conventional parlor audience, bringing into throbbing life again the dreams that we all lose, of love that shall not die even under treachery and neglect, of ideals that shall shine undimmed through earth's darkest, thorniest way.

"If fortune comes again, I'll crown you, my brave, patient wife!" I murmured. "Ah, but it is not worth your wearing. It is a weary, tinsel crown, that of the world."

The sea called loudly. *Infra* stood at the door. She saw me fold the letter away; the light in her eyes greeted me unquestioningly, nor afterwards did she ask me any question. This absolute loftiness of faith in all ways, small and great, implying her own loftiness of truth, almost piqued a coward like myself.

"Say you will never leave me, *Infra*," I said, appealing to her in the old, sick way; "whatever happens, you will love me, cling to me—say it!"

She answered with her own patient, wholesome wonder at my petulance:

"Can't you understand, Alfred, that when the saints have once said that, we've said it for all time?"

VI

INFRA



WAS standing on a ladder, painting our dwelling on the outside and experimenting childishly with some original designs in contrasting colors for ornamenting the eaves, when Dr. Langthorne and her lover appeared in our lane for the first time that summer.

Alpena, who had stopped to make suggestions in technique more evil even than my own crude art, and who was devouring at the same time the ripest of our gooseberries from the bushes below, was too late with her "Get down! Say, scrabble down as quick as you can!" for, as I turned to descry the situation, I found myself facing the pair in the lane.

I grinned amiably, arrested paint-brush in air.

"Why, it's Alf—Alf—" hesitated Margaret; "how you are changed! How strong you are looking!"

"And giddy," said Alpena. "Isn't he giddy, Dr. Langthorne?"

For we had entertained the peddler at dinner, and according to our custom at the Bar, when needing such offices, he, in payment, had taken me into the barn, ostensibly to cut my hair. But he was of an artistic turn of mind, wearing black curls himself and rings in his ears, and he had not so much

INFRA

shorn me as he had curled and elaborated me into some lost, lingering flower of the romantic ages.

Alpena had laughed to the point of physical pain every time she had looked at me since the event, and she now yielded herself again to this excruciating torture of enjoyment.

Her white teeth were just enough overlapped to provoke study; she looked like a flower of the tail-stemmed species, her black head and insolent, childish face hanging a little to one side; her slender height in itself was striking.

Dr. Saxe—Margaret's companion—looked at the girl with that interest which no human being ever failed to show in her presence, his kind, frank eyes answering her mirth with a smile. Some demon took possession of Alpena: she turned wilfully sullen—she was the picture of gloom.

"And how are you, Little One?" Dr. Langthorne went towards her with that air—unconscious, no doubt—of patronizing and guiding every one with whom she came in contact.

Alpena caught a berry between her teeth, without reply.

"Your manners are as unique as ever, Alpy. Are you not glad to see me again?"

"Oh, we are doing very well," said the girl, condescending to laugh a bit again in her fascinating, heathen way. "Captain Alfred is in love with his wife, and I am in love with the Bookwriter."

Margaret smiled indulgently. "Was not your heart big enough to keep me too, Alpena?"

"No, it is a little bit of a heart. You said yourself I had a small heart in size, doctor, and the feelings go by the size. I know that by myself. My heart's fine, always!"

FLOOD-TIDE

Our coon-cat bounced from a tree-branch on to Alpena's shoulder, as to another cold point in nature, and stood there with fierce eyes and bristling tail. The beauty put up her long arms and drew the wild, unloving thing down caressingly to her lips.

Dr. Saxe looked, with those frank blue eyes kindling a little with admiration, as he might have looked at a picture. Margaret did not see the look, wearing her own lofty smile.

"I am content to be dislodged, dear, if it is by some one worthier," but her tone instinctively avowed that this could not be. "I think there is more breeze here than at the Reach," she continued, her fine nostrils filling. "We are staying at the Reach, and we sailed over. Is it not salubrious here?" She turned to her companion her magnificent, seeking eyes.

"I like it all!" cried Dr. Saxe, genially. I had never seen a handsomer man; his great frame and bearded face carried a simplicity that would have inspired a child with confidence.

"Margaret Langthorne has found her ideal," I thought without a pang.

I had a vague desire to send Alpena home; the spirit of mischief was rampant in her; she kept her stand among the fruit bushes, passionately caressing the coon-cat in defiance of our presence, with that interesting, sullen gloom on her face.

"You have not seen my wife," I cried with a buoyant thought, stooping to put some stones on the covers of my paint-pots, a forethought necessary where the coon-cat and the wind were indiscriminately active. "You have not seen Infra. Come!"

Margaret's mouth twitched humorously at my confidence.

"I remember her as a charming woman," she

INFRA

said; "but it is possible she may not be willing to welcome callers at all inopportune hours of the day. I remember her as an industrious woman."

"Oh, *Infra*—*Infra* is always ready to welcome people," I asserted, standing with curled head and "heaving" open the door for them to enter.

The situation verified my assertion, for it appeared that the "wreck" had entered some time before through the shed door, and *Infra* was on her knees fitting the length of an old coat of mine to his unfortunate frame.

She was, indeed, at the very crucial point of clipping the tails to suit his shorter person; but she might have been a saint at her devotions from the unperplexed grace with which she rose to receive us. Dr. Saxe made my wife a bow worthy of her.

"S'pose ye've heered how I got my timbers shivered over to the ledges?" said the "wreck," with his forlorn laugh.

"Ah, too bad! too bad!" said Dr. Saxe, looming like a giant of fortune in our rustic parlor.

The "wreck" was always more voluble in *Infra*'s presence and softened with considerations which he did not express elsewhere.

"I been a sinner, too," he informed us.

"Ah!" said the doctor, with compassionate embarrassment. It was a strange scene.

"I was off earnin' a hunderd dollars a month with my vessel, an' I got to goin' an' carousin' with folks 't stole from me an' cleaned me out an' then luffed at me till I hadn't no more heart left in me 'n a little fresh water suckker."

"Ah! ah!"

"Then I thought o' comin' to see the folks to the Bar, an' I got 'most home an' was wrecked over on

FLOOD-TIDE

the ledges. 'Twa'n't no high motives I come from. I didn't bring no money nor ary help ter any one. I come jest because I was all broke an' beat out an' wanted ter git a little comfort. 'Twas all low motives."

"It doesn't make any difference, Scarr," said Infra, "so long as you came home."

The "wreck's" eyes glistened with hope for an instant. "I may git started ag'in. I may do somebody some good yit!" Then the old mania of despair settled on his face, but he spoke humbly and gently, without his cracked laugh.

"Infry's goin' to fix me over a coat. Don't ye hurry about the bindin', Infry. Wind's gone from the east'ard." And, discarding the curtailed garment, he left us meekly and without apology in his calico shirt.

"You are latitudinarian in your ethics, Mrs.—Mrs. Captain Alfred," said Dr. Saxe, recalling before any other name the familiar colloquialism of the Bar. I wondered how Infra, who had never even discerned from a distance the walls of Vassar, would divine this utterance. But she would have read his soul if he had talked to her in Greek.

"I go by my experience," she said. "You have got to get people home before you can help them."

"True!" said the great man, earnestly.

Margaret veiled her splendid eyes as if in superior doubt of these sentiments.

Alpy—the pest—had seated herself on the doorstep, her Greek profile carelessly outlined where Dr. Saxe could well observe.

"My wife and Captain Abram Shale," said I, "have a way of looking far into the great universal and optimistic design."

INFRA

"And you, too, have you not?" said Margaret. "It seems contagious. But I fear it does make a great deal of difference, the motives that influence people."

"I think it shows more faith in God and love to our own—when we do fail"—said Infra, slowly, "to come home than to despair. To come home and try again."

"It is more selfish, certainly," said the other woman. "And what if he does not try again?"

"I should want him home all the more," said my wife.

"I wish God was like Cousin Infra!" said the girl in the doorway, with an impish lightness of tone, her exquisite profile clear as a framed Madonna.

Infra paled. "Our Alpy is a spoiled baby," she said, "and doesn't even know how to talk yet, much less think."

Alpena laughed and blushed. She was servile to no one on earth save to the rustic woman who was my wife.

"Isn't she dear?" she cried. "She's a saint, you know, and she *is* a saint. Captain Alfred is *professing* to be one—did you know that, Dr. Margaret?"

"Have you really joined the order?" A polished churchwoman herself, Margaret could not keep a certain sparkle of cynicism out of her eye at my rude faith.

Margaret's lover was gazing ever with smiling interest at the mad girl in the doorway. Some sick, restless surge was in the air. I went over to my wife and opened the organ beside her.

"Sing for us, dear," I said. "Dr. Saxe will be glad of my presumption when he hears you. Dr. Langthorne knows."

FLOOD-TIDE

“Sing!” cried the sprite on the step—“sing to us, Infra!”

My wife’s voice carried me to bliss, always—better, to the strain of duty, the deep heart of peace. I remember it was about her we instinctively gathered when she rose afterwards, as though some balm for the fever of life, some lamp for its darkness, lay in her quiet bosom.

The brilliant professional woman, the wilful, bewitching girl, the strong, successful man, stood somehow in the affiliated attitude of children before this simple woman; they touched her hand with unspoken appeal in voice and eye.

VII

DINSMORE AND THE WHALE



T was a heavy day for me when the expected call for Infra came from her sister at Whale Harbor, forty miles away.

Being but an earthly captain and a dimly fledged saint, I stood out for it that some one might be employed to go in her place, but Infra shook her head and smiled with a purpose good to see, I should think, on the face of one dear and longed for who has promised to come to us were our life in danger.

"*I'm* glad Aunt Infra's gone!" said Dinsmore, from the lane, starting towards the bushes, however, and grinning, fiendlike, at my misery.

"I know—so that you can live naked over in the cove, along with the crabs and devil-fish."

"Yep. Aunt Infra use' ter come over an' haul me out when I'd only been in an hour. Ef the's anything I hate 'tis to be under pet'coat gov'ment."

"I'll look out for you with some trousers government, the best I can, Dinsmore."

"Pooh! You're nothin' but a fishin' captain. I'm a sailin' captain!" Rank with his freedom from moral restraint, Dinsmore turned a pair of heels to me and fled. This was the most opprobrious little captain along shore; yet he had a heart,

FLOOD-TIDE

when ill and forlorn, and on those occasions that suffering organ had frequently turned his footsteps towards his Aunt Infra, the source of comfort which now, in rubicund health and courage, he so proudly disclaimed.

As prearranged, I had been taken in by the Glee-sons—Dinsmore's family—during this epoch of Infra's absence, they being near neighbors and in some degree of kinship, but, oh!—their housekeeping was not hers!

Those days dwell in my memory as a prolonged attendance on the spectacular, during which, when not at my work with the traps and nets, I gazed open-mouthed from any seat in the theatre where a restless fate might throw me. Dinsmore—who had just now escaped from his mother on their way to Sunday-school—had preceded me down to the house with the purloining of pie as an immediate aim; but his grandfather, coming over from his own domain for some similar purpose, had captured him red-handed and set him down to a lesson.

There sat the white-haired man, with smooth, pink cheeks, his voyaging all turned to rest, and the old little boy, wise and wrinkled with the consciousness of much weighty sea-craft and with a mouth sullen from intercepted pie.

"Now, tell the story o' Jonah, little son."

"Yah! I git licked for tellin' stories through the week, an' now it's Sunday ye want me to reel off the biggest yarn ever heered tell on!"

"Don't you think, Dinny, 't the Lord could rig up a fish to suit himself?"

"Why don't he make somethin' like it now, then?" said Dinsmore, his mouth watering at the imagination. "The' ain't nothin' around now but cod and

DINSMORE AND THE WHALE

haddick. I tell ye ef that old cirkis of a whale 'd swallowed me, I wouldn't 'a' come out in no three days, I bet ye. I'd be there now."

"The Lord wanted Jonah ag'in, ye see. Like as not, he wouldn't care about sech a Sabbath-tormentin' little pipe as you be. Mebbe he'd 'a' been glad to keep ye there."

"He wouldn't be no gladder to keep me there 'n I'd be to stay. Ef ye'd only jest make me churn Sunday ye'd have me in complete mis'ry. Wonder why ye don't!"

"This holy day is passin' away."

"I'm darn glad of it!"

"Be we any better for it?—that's the question."

"I'm wuss. I never knew a Sunday yit 't I wa'n't the wuss for. Say, Grappy, ma says I'll have that big 'lustrated Bible o' your'n, with the picters of hell in it, when you're through with it for good 'n' all."

"Sartin, little son, it goes to you. Now, mind the lesson. Who is it tells us we're all dead under the law—cappit mortar—an' speaks o' the ten horns an' the great iron teeth, an' is meant as the stamper o' the Residue?"

"The Devil."

"Sho, now! ye little infiddle—no! no! Think ag'in."

"The Lord."

"Sure. Sure. Now, who is it is spoken of as the sarpint a hunderd an' twenty feet long, with wings afore the fall, and brass upon his tail, to be given over in the sixth universal kingdom with the head an' horns left out?"

"The Lord."

"Look a-here, Dinsmore, you better mind what

FLOOD-TIDE

kind o' steam your little pipe is a-lettin' off! An' git down off 'n that shelf an' let them cocoanut flakes alone! Now, you think ag'in."

"The Devil."

"Sure. Now, little son, what sect is it that works six years without no Sunday, an' then has Sunday for the whole seventh year?"

"I hope I'd die, Grappy, four o'clock in the mornin', first day o' the seventh year."

"I can't say myself," said the old man, sincerely, "that I should care about quite so long a Sunday—no—no—mebby not. But now you let alone o' the paregoric bottle an' scrabble down here! Yer ma's beatin' in down the lane from Sunday-school. I can see her jib-tops'l flyin' over by the squaw bush."

The patriarch rose to resuscitate the fire for prospective cooking. Dinsmore sat dreamily, temporary oblivion through his draught at the paregoric bottle softening the woes in his wide eyes.

"Ain't you all an aspect in here!" said young Mrs. Gleeson as she entered, taking off a beautiful pink bonnet and placing it high on a bracket. Dorna was not angry with us, but she was rightfully contemptuous. She herself was glowing both with physical and intellectual exertion. "Ain't you folks in here an aspect!"

The old man, struggling with the neglected fire, blushed consciously. The comatose Dinny regarded the situation with froggish indifference.

"You're under this afternoon's topic, Captain Alfred," she said to me.

"Why do they always appoint some one who is absent to expound the coming topic?"

"I should think you'd lived on the Bar long enough to know it's because there's a bare chance

DINSMORE AND THE WHALE

o' their not hearin' as how they're 'under a topic, and so comin' into Sunday-school and gittin' pinned down to expoundin' of it. I never see sech a shirkin' o' topics as the Bar has got into. It's a thing we'd ought to stand right up to! I 'ain't never run away from nothin' in my life yit, an' I don't propose to spend the day wild-strawberryin' or sail off on a clam-bake, the way some does, jest because I ain't got the sand to stand up an' turn the lights on to some little text o' scripster!"

"What is the topic I am put under?" I asked.

"The 'Valley o' the Dry Bones.'"

I turned pale. Dinsmore regarded me with an apathetic awakening to a fellowship in misery. "I'm goin' over to the cove to see what the ducks is a-doin' of," he murmured.

"I had you in tow when I started for Sunday-school," declared his mother. "Where did you part cable?"

"Down by the spring."

"You come back here! I suppose you know what day this is?"

Dinny gave a cynical laugh. "I guess I ain't likely to furgit it. I've run afoul of every kind o' mis'ry there is except havin' you cut my hair with yer old loose-gear'd shears."

"It's time that was done," said Dorna, her happy, large-souled face taking on a sort of religious sternness. "Mother's been neglectin' of her boy." She tied the towel around his neck. "Don't you fret. You're too full o' soothin' syrup to suffer much."

"I wonder," sneered Dinsmore in blind wrath at his fate—"I wonder 't I had the luck to git a little o' that down afore you hove up in the lane! Why

FLOOD-TIDE

can't ye let the peddler cut my hair when he comes?" he howled.

"You don't suppose I'm goin' to engage the peddler for cuttin' the hair off'n sech a little June katy-did as you be, do you? There's older heads waitin' for him."

She gave a significant glance at Grandpa Gleeson's flowing locks.

"I ain't goin' to have no jabberin' heathen from the Orient makin' a hayrick o' my loft," said the old man, firmly. "Look at Captain Alfred," he added.

Dinsmore, kicking, amid tears and objurgations, paused to leer at me derisively.

"Say, ma," said he, at last, in a tone of manly reason, as these tonsorial offices continued, "I wish, honest, 't ye'd put down the shears an' pull the rest o' my hair out with yer hands."

"Couldn't ye git what's left on sonny's head a little evenner?" said Grandpa Gleeson, who sympathized at heart with his heir, and was proud of his looks as well as of his premature wisdom.

"It's as even as my implements 'll allow. Now, son, you put some cotton-battin' in your ears and march into the bedroom. You're goin' to be washed."

"Lord! Dorna," said the old man with unfeigned reproach, "he's in soak all the week. Can't ye let him alone o' water Sunday?"

"That's salt water, but this is goin' to be fresh from the tea-kettle, and it's goin' to be administered along o' some sand soap and sapolio."

"What difference 'll that make?" yelled Dinsmore, frantically—"fresh or salt? My skin's water-tight, ain't it? Ye can't wash through my skin, can ye?"

"No, but I can git through several layers o' soil

DINSMORE AND THE WHALE

that salt water don't have no effect on, down to your original Adam substance. Now, you wad your ears and start!—How d' do, captain? How d' do, Mis' Temple? How d' do, Harl an' Arch? How d' do, all? Walk right along in an' set down!—Dinsmore Gleeson, don't let me hear any more o' your yop an' set-up, in there! and do you finish up thorough the work begun on your earthly tabernacle or I'll know the reason why!"

"Wal', you hurry up an' git my pants mended by the time I git through!"

Mrs. Temple had come of a rather secular errand, but she seemed easily persuaded to the chair offered her. Grandpa Gleeson, who, as we all knew, flagrantly and earnestly desired to be written of in a book, shuffled into the seat beside her.

"Be you an advent?" he asked her with mild inquisitiveness, hoping perhaps to find her of that faith, which was his own.

Newly arrived at the Bar, and not yet attaching any theological significance to the question, she denied the imputation with friendly blushes.

"Oh no, indeed! Nothing of an advent, I assure you. I hope you will be so kind as to consider me just one of yourselves."

"I meant a soul-sleeper," he instructed her gravely; "that's the other name for it."

"Oh, I hope not, with all my heart, Captain Gleeson."

"Perhaps you're a saint?" he sighed, regarding her with an eye as cold as so gentle and kindly an eye could be.

I was pleased to hear her deny this suggestion with even greater force.

"There's several saints in the room," he went on;

"Dorna's one, and Captain Alfred, there — he's one."

Mrs. Temple lifted her eyes to my face with natural curiosity, under the circumstances. I was about to explain to her the merely denominational import of the term, when Grandpa Gleeson faced her with the frankest of all questions:

"How old be you?"

She replied with equal simplicity.

"Ye look a year older than that," he averred thoughtfully, "mebby two."

I thought she did not, but this was Grandpa Gleeson's manner with the tender sex. "The suttility of the woman"—he began, indulgently, for the "bookwriter" was interesting—"sence Adam's fall, the suttility of the woman—"

"Say, ma, ye got my pants ready?"

"You can be puttin' on your shoes."

"I tell ye my pants has to go on first. How'd *you* like to put on yer shoes afore ye had anything else on? Why don't ye hurry? Pa says you're slow as Stock-still—have to have a landmark to see if ye move."

"If your father was home, Dinsmore Gleeson, he'd go in there, and you'd play Isaac and Josh around a switch!—What was the state and standin' of them two in the garden"—she continued the religious discussion she had been carrying on with her callers—"providin' in regard to them forbidden fruits that they hadn't tasted nary one? There wa'n't no penalty of death pronounced on Eve, but the verdick was that her sorrows should be multiplied, and I'd like to know who'll stand up here and say that the Bible platform ain't true?"

"Grave is hell, and hell is in the sides of the pit," interpolated Grandpa Gleeson with finality.

DINSMORE AND THE WHALE

"I've failed to find it so yet," said Dorna, reminded of the potatoes and rising to put them on to boil.

"Has the retribution of all things taken place?" he asked, searchingly.

"Retribution and cat's foot!" replied this fearless woman. "You're a-talkin' with the carnal mind. Why, I ask you — why didn't Adam, instead of halterin' and apologizin'—why didn't he step right along up and take his dose?"

"Say, ma, I'll be fly-blowed in here afore you git them pants ready!"

"You quit railin', son, and git into bed and wait. Mother's pursuin' her industries as fast as she can. —My whole mind and centre," she continued, lapsing into a sort of poetical rhapsody as she pursued her theological argument, "is a-wanderin' back to the land of my nativity."

"I must be going," said Mrs. Temple quietly, aside. "They tell me you have a horse and wagon that you will let, Captain Gleeson?"

"They do, eh, little sis?"

Mrs. Temple weighed a hundred and eighty pounds; she had never conversed familiarly with Grandpa Gleeson before, but she met his paternal smile with a kind one of her own.

"Yes."

"And can *you* tell *me* the meaning of the four great divers, the ten horns and a little horn, and a time and a time and a beginning of times?"

"No," she answered, simply, "I cannot."

"No—no—ye can't, can ye!" He gloated over her ignorance with indulgent commiseration. "Wal', now—"

"Mrs. Temple wishes to know about the horse and wagon, captain," I appealed from that elucidation

of the Apocalypse which I knew to be wellnigh endless.

"Eh?" he responded without interest — "so ye want to know about the old hoss an' wagon? Wal', the old hoss has only got one fault—she's apt to end over and lay down in the road. Ye want to look over specially and not drive her on to no bad roads."

As the highways were all primitive and treacherous, Mrs. Temple's face took on an expression of some concern.

"And the express 'll have to be tinkered up some afore she's fit to use. I've got to hew out some shafts for her, and put some spokes into the off hind wheel, and reel up the hub on the nigh fore wheel; then she'll carry ye, I guess. That's her!" he added, pointing to an apparently decaying vehicle stranded on the far side of the lane: "them's pollock 't I've got dryin' on her. I shall have to put them over on the flake when I git to tinkerin' on her up."

"I will be patient, captain," murmured Mrs. Temple, "and meanwhile pursue the healthful exercise of walking. Thank you very much." She moved towards the door softly, with a smiling apology for disturbing the discussion.

"Won't ye wait for some music?" was asked of her, gravely.

To this, also, she acceded, observing the sudden solemnity which had fallen on the occasion. Dorna went to the organ.

"'Child of the world,'"

she chanted loudly, in flat though joyful tones—

"'Child of the world, be you tired of your bondage?'"

As to some presumptive denizen of this unknown

DINSMORE AND THE WHALE

world of which Dorna sang, all eyes were directed towards Mrs. Temple, where a chair had been placed for her as the focal object of interest.

“ ‘Child of the world, do you gall at your chains?
Come! hear us calling to throw off your bondage!’ ”

screamed Dorna, jubilantly.

I saw a lean, virile little arm reach out from an aperture in the bedroom door and seize the trousers which Dorna had laid aside for these more spiritual oblations of song. Soon I heard the bedroom window open softly; later I caught through the window a passing leer from Dinsmore as he fled down the lane, thread and needle dangling merrily from his rear.

Even this could not make Arch and Harlan smile. Life was tragically serious to these two. They missed Alpena, who came not at all. Why? For that had been her custom. Dorna's house was a sort of festive reporting ground, a convention field, where all might be found, sooner or later, during the day.

“ ‘Child of the world!—’ ”

An aggressive smell of burning potatoes arose. Knowing that Dorna would have to prepare others in their place and rearrange generally the composition of our dinner, I slipped deftly into the pantry on my way out-of-doors; there I found Grandpa Gleeson munching the remnants of that pie which had been first confiscated by his heir.

“ The ‘bookwriter’ ain't what I hoped she was,” he observed. “ She ain't even as suttler as the usual darter o' Eve. She's a innercent creetur'!”

I took some cold muffins and cheese, and went on

FLOOD-TIDE

my way. “‘The Valley of the Dry Bones,’” I reflected, and quailed. A group tending merrily towards the wild strawberry fields commented a little on my preoccupation. I could see my boat beckoning along the dancing sea-way to the clam-bake. Mechanically I straightened the scarf at the neck of my calico shirt—for I was learning more and more to do without clothes—and toiled on, with the school-house and a corroding topic as an objective point.

VIII

REMEMBERING SALEM



ES, I ain't disguisin' of it"—Captain Shale addressed me from the other side of the fence—"it's Sunday, but I'm in the hay-field."

If rest were a synonyme for Sabbath-keeping, then he was observing the day punctiliously. He was bolstered up among the flowers and herbage, between his rake and a boulder, in an attitude expressive of eternal repose. "Yes," he owned unreservedly, "ye've caught me! sweatin' around in the hay-field."

Perspiration would have been impossible, even to one actively employed; the wind from the sea on this July day was resolutely bracing.

"'Tain't because I despise the assemblin' of the people together," continued Captain Shale, "but I been so much o' my life out in the open, 't, come ter git into that little school-house, with the east windys all shet down, an' try to git my legs and body inter one o' them forms 't's made for little gals eight years old—wal', it dooz cramp me, lungs 'n' all. My senses kinder leaves me.

"Then, when Dorny Gleeson, for insternce, gits up an' takes a text outer the Bible as clean as ef she was haulin' a tooth outer yer head, an' holds it up there like a wrack on a sand-beach, an' dances her

FLOOD-TIDE

sillygisms 'round it, north, east, south, an' west—wal', I don' want to smile, but I know 't the Creator himself couldn't keep no long face on!"

The captain's brown gingham shirt was open at the throat to give him breath, and he drew in the rude air with deep inspirations as one who would have fainted but for such reviving. "Ah," he murmured with joy, "the wind is breezin'!"

The boats were dancing over in the harbor, and I saw Dr. Saxe's yacht playing there like a sea swan.

I smiled, remembering without regret how Margaret Langthorne had dilated on the joys of poverty, the fascination there would be for her in taking up a life of the simplest strenuous toil, if fate should ever so direct us; but when the form of a sad fishing boat had loomed on our mental horizon, she had turned shiveringly from it to the commonplace of a yacht. For dainty living and fastidiousness in all things were the accustomed, the commonplace, in her life.

"For the love of Aaron! ain't that Alpeny Marlow over in that fair-bearded doctor's harbor rig?" said Captain Shale, with some contempt for modern sea-vehicles, but proud of his far sight. "Looks like Alpeny's red jacket."

It was Alpena's red jacket and graceful black head.

"She is going for a sail with Margaret and Dr. Saxe, then," I concluded.

"No — for Dr. Marg'et came ashore some time ago, and she and Mis' Temple have jest gone inter the school-house together; there's a meetin', off an' on, all day ter-day, ye know. No, accordin' to my soundin's, Alpeny's a-bossin' them sails an' the

REMEMBERING SALEM

owner of 'em all by herself, at the present time speakin'."

The girl had been roaming along the shore, as was her wont—I thought—and had perhaps even asked the fair-bearded Norseman to take her sailing, being guileless as a child, or, rather, with a guile as ruthless as a child's.

"I wish Alpena had a mother," I said, following the course of the swimming yacht with some indignation.

"She was towin' on to Mis' Temple in my house, the other evenin'," smiled Captain Shale, "an' she put up her arms 'round her neck an' asked her ef she wouldn't 'dobt her. The's somethin' about Alpeny when she kittens up to anybody that way, with them white teeth o' hern jest a mite twisted, ye know, an' hell an' thunder hid down in her eyes, makes me think of a play 't I seen long ago away off down to Salem."

I withdrew my gaze both from yacht and school-house and bolstered my own frame in an attitude of eternal rest.

"It was fifty year ago, but I'd give a dollar an' a half to go to that show ag'in, I b'lieve." There was a long pause. We distinctly heard the lapping of the waves on the beach. "That is, ef I couldn't see it for no less.

"'Creation,' it appears to me, was the name of it. Fust scene was a little speck o' light."

Captain Abram Shale, his face rapt with reminiscence, seemed to have wandered far away. Some blue jays had stopped their chattering to listen, and some yellow butterflies had lit attentively on his slippers, and at last he murmured slowly to our suspense:

FLOOD-TIDE

“Next scene was a little speck more o’ light.”

The blue jays laughed and the butterflies soared disdainfully away, but I waited.

“Scene arter that was still a little speck more o’ light—an’ so it went, on an’ on, until that stage was so light ’t ef anything was goin’ to happen on it, ye could see whatever it was ’t come on to it to happen.

“An’ as we sot there lookin’, fust we knew one o’ those trap-doors that they have to play-actin’ was lifted clean outer the floor, an’ Adam an’ Eve was hove up into the garden.”

He strengthened his already secure position against the bowlder, renewed the failing resources of his pipe, and still I waited.

“Was that all?” I asked at last, very tenderly.

“Ye know ’twa’n’t all,” said he, with gentle reproach.

“Then there was a thumpin’ an’ a scratchin’ around that trap-hole, an’ up come the—ahem!—ahem!—the gol’durndest snake I ever see. Some po’tions of it was small an’ some was as bulgin’ as ef it had swallowed the hull of South Afriky, an’ it wriggled up to Eve an’ held out a r’al hand to her with a greenin’ apple, an’ she—she was a dretful han’som’ woman ’t was only jest actin’ out the part o’ Eve, ye know—o’ course she couldn’t do no other ways but take that apple.—I got some tobakker here now ’t ’ll keep the moskitters away. Form’ly sech few as the’ was—for the climate here don’t agree with ’em—ust ter be hangin’ ’round me ter ketch a little whiff off’n my pipe, but sence I begun to smoke this ’ere ‘Lily-o’-the-Valley’ plug, I ’ain’t seen nary moskitter.”

“Was that all?”

REMEMBERING SALEM

"Ye know 'twa'n't all," he accused me, mildly. "Ye've read the story, 'ain't ye?" he questioned me further, without asperity.

"Yes."

"Excuse me for askin', but I know folks ain't as conversant with it as they was in my young days; still, you be'n around the world a good deal, and I reckoned you might 'a' got a-hold o' the pertickalers somehow.

"Wal', then, Eve, o' course she begun tryin' to git Adam ter eat that apple. He said no. 'Le's go an' git some prunes,' he says, 'or somethin' 't they ain't no cuss on.' Eve said she'd ruther go with her stommick plumb empty 'n eat prunes, or in fact anythin' else 'ceptin' them pertickaler greenin' apples, an' she got to foolin' 'round him an' fingerin' the button-hole on his coat—"

"I thought Adam didn't have any coat."

"Sartin, but it wouldn't 'a' done to present him that way, ye know. The' was a pretty big-sized audience. She got to fingerin' the button-hole on his coat, an' at last she got her arms up around his neck"—Captain Abram choked with the implied delicacy of the situation—"and—wal', he had to give in. 'Here! Hand it here!' says he, an' begun chonkin'.

"The' wasn't a dry eye in that room when Adam stood there chonkin' down that apple. D' ye know what it makes me think of," said Captain Abram, reverting to some dreamy speculation of the present, "when the women folks rigs up with them paper flowers in their bunnits an' meanders along up there to the school-house? It somehow kind o' makes me think o' flies around a daub o' merlasses."

I was sorry for this. It somehow seemed unworthy

FLOOD-TIDE

of Captain Shale, but, besides being half asleep, he was really the helpless victim of fresh air: he could not breathe except through long draughts of the outer element.

"I know what ye're goin' to ask me," said he, bracing himself again firmly in the moss-rose slippers; "ye're goin' to ask me ef that was all.—

"No, 'twa'n't all.

"The' was some blue smoke pilin' up there back of the stage so 't ye could jest see the tops o' the heads o' the wicked folks settin' around in it, an' one on 'em 't was rigged up with horns an' sech ter act out the devil—o' course he couldn't do no other ways but act out what he was put there to act—he clim' up on to the stage with one o' these 'ere play-actin' pitchforks 't don't hurt nobody, an' fust he took an' pitched Adam over inter that ar mess o' blue smoke, an' then he giv' a long groan—she was a dretful han'-som' woman, but I guess she must 'a' weighed nigh onto a hunderd an' seventy—an' took an' pitched Eve over inter that 'ar mess o' blue smoke 't was pilin' up there back o' the stage.—

"Yes. Yes—that was all."

The moan of the retreating tide came up to us.

"What did you think of it?" I inquired.

"Wal', I was interested, but I didn't take no instructions by it. I be'n deceived in this world an' had my kindness abused, an' be'n cheated an' lied to an' stole from an' knocked down an' trompled on in my time, but the' ain't nobody 't ever done me a wrong 't I'd take any satisfaction in seein' hove over inter perdition. They had a hard time enough of it; they didn't hurt me, they hurt themselves.

"'Tain't conscience makes ye suffer—the way some says. It may make ye sad sometimes, but it

REMEMBERING SALEM

can't give ye ary torment. It's conscience keeps ye cl'ar o' torment. The less 'n' less a man gits o' conscience, the more he cusses around as ef he was in a nest o' hornits. Ef his conscience is big he plasters over his big wounds an' don't keer for little ones; he knows 't the eternal reckonin's is go'n' to make all things squar', here an' hereafter.

"Them's my soundin's o' God A'mighty, as fur as my plumb-line reaches."

He withdrew his color-faded but pervading gaze from the heavens, as with a sort of premonition of Mrs. Captain Shale in her Sunday bonnet bearing down upon us from the house-path.

"Here comes Sylphy," said he, making some effort to reinstate his feet among the wild roses, strawberry vines, daisies, stumps, rocks, and buttercups with which they were surrounded. "I don't know what she'll say when she finds me here in the hay-field Sunday."

What she said was this: "I sh'd be sorry, Abram Shale, but I shouldn't be surprised, ef you had to be yanked out o' the church an' baptized over ag'in!"

"I *wish*, mother," said he, smiling on her kindly but feebly—the rake which he had hidden behind the boulder suddenly slipping and revealing its whole pernicious length among the brambles—"I *wish* 't you was the general of an army!" That was all. She passed on.

"After all," said Captain Abram, gently picking up the treacherous rake and resting his benign hand upon it, "ef religion ain't somethin' to be messed right in along with our daily livin', then I don' know what it is. Now, for insternce, the's religion even jest in tuckin' a man's bed into the foot, way it ought ter be tucked.

FLOOD-TIDE

"An' when it comes to preachin', blowin' an' spoutin' away on a text ain't preachin', but a man's countenance had ought to change."

"What?"

"A man's countenance had ought to change. The's more to it than the' is to a lot o' words. A man may blow an' spout on a text, and, after all, it's his own git-up. But when a man's countenance changes, the hand o' God has touched him. It's a look like them that, when they lays down, they have a vision."

IX

UNDER A TOPIC



OW often in past days I had sat, irresponsibly grinning, beside Margaret Langthorne on the little side-form where now she sat with Mrs. Temple, a smile—not of base enjoyment, as mine had been, but of superior, gentle patronage—on her face. And now I was one who was to furnish food for the arena—a lobster-trapper and toiler at the nets, a fisherman of rude faith under an overwhelming topic.

I am not keen in the study of character. I look on only, and draw conclusions slowly, but it seemed to me, the more I knew of her, that Margaret liked only the things she had not and the things she had lost. She sat at the other side of the room, facing me, and when I met her eyes they seemed to be contemplating me with the old, maternal, caressing indulgence which had once bewitched me so; but with the conclusive sapience of a child, or of a fool, scorched at a fire, the avenue through which those eye-beams had once pierced me was callous. So I gazed down dully at my boots, a comprehensive object of study, extending from toes to thigh.

Elder Fyrando, at the desk, cleared his throat several times in an unobtrusive manner, and then inquired generally, in a half-whisper:

FLOOD-TIDE

"Where is Dorna?"

"Home," said Aunt Nag, who enjoyed sniffing at the trail of a helpless dilemma.

"She said," said Tilly, "that it was heart-renderin' the way folks here to the Bar was cuttin' loose from their topics; she said she'd expounded twelve that didn't belong to her, this mornin', and she'd come ag'in this evenin', but she'd got to go home between whiles an' git some infillin'."

"Did she leave word what was the first afternoon topic?"

"The 'Valley o' the Dry Bones,'" said Tilly, promptly.

"Who did she leave word was under it?"

The women knew, and they looked at me. I had not lost heart of intention, but suddenly I blushed scarlet, queer invisible insects buzzed over my ears and head. I remembered a hitherto unthought-of contingency—that I stammered helplessly, even under the most favorable auspices.

The human heart is deceitful, sometimes cruel, but it can also be touched to the deepest springs of mercy.

"Before the topics is took up," said Rocksey Tate, rising, "I want to tell of a little providence 't happened to me last week, so 't I knew the Lord was on my side. I had some fish, slack-salted, 't I spread over on the flake to dry, back up. The fog an' rain-storms come, then the sun come out—and then come the flies! At that, they all told me 'twa'n't no use to try to save them fish, an' I thought I'd got to lose 'em, when one o' these birds 't eats flies come up from the swamp, and that little bird kept muggin' away at them flies. I don' know whether 'twas one bird," said Rocksey, as if pausing at a grave theological point, "or a lot 't looked jest like him."

UNDER A TOPIC

“‘Twas probably a good many ‘t looked alike,” suggested Elder Fyrando, with equal ecclesiastical gloom.

“Flies hatches, this time o’ year, two seconds after the eggs is laid,” said a woman, who did not rise to offer this testimony, but gave it cheerfully, sitting. “Since others has been makin’ their brags,” she went on, in a humble Christian manner, and using this phrase only as an approved figure of speech—“since others has been makin’ their brags, I’d like to tell o’ the providence ‘t seemed to be over my cow.” She now rose.

“You all know she’s the ugliest, stubbidest little cow ‘t ever was. Wal’, last Friday, Ed Nirk’s big cow, with horns a foot an’ a half long an’ sharp-p’inted, broke fence and come down the road bellerin’ to beat the band, and made for my little stubbid cow. My cow was tied to a stake, but she took one look at them horns and didn’t wait for no further calkerlations. She bunted Ed’s cow over, and there the forlorn crittur lay lettin’ the blaats out of her. I cut the rope to give my cow a better chance, and a chance was all she needed to send Ed’s great, vain-glor’ous crittur bellerin’ up the road back home ag’in.” The speaker ended in a tone void, most of all, of any imputation of triumph, but recitative and dutiful only, befitting the sacred monotony of the hour.

“I’m glad to see there’s some advents among us,” said Elder Fyrando, with excessive mildness, as an offset to the brute gymnastics and flavor of the hippodrome so recently presented to our imagination.

“Yes, I’m here, for one,” hastily admitted Ziba Skank, who loved to be observed.

“I suppose, Zebe,” said a saint who enjoyed all the privileges of a gentle senility, “‘t you ain’t makin’ no

FLOOD-TIDE

calculations for garden sass an' corn? I suppose you reckon on the end o' the world and your soul's sleepin' a thousand years? Some says 't ye hitched on to that belief jest so 't ye could laze." The ancient man laughed softly to himself.

"You'll be a dreadful surprised man, Ziba Skank," interposed Tilly, doing her best to supply the forceful rostrum usually occupied by Dorna—"you'll be a dreadful surprised man, Zebe, when your spirit is hauled out o' that old tabernacle it's in now and takes a look around!"

"I shall be very much surprised," drawled Ziba, "if it happens before a time and a time and a be-ginnin' o' times."

"There won't be no sech dawdlin' works about it," reiterated Tilly, stanch emulator of the absent one, "it'll all happen in an instant minute, jest like anybody ships off their balloon when they goes up."

Ziba dropped his jaw in blank despair at the prospect of such ultimately nimble proceedings.

"I wonder what kind of faith there is among city-raised folks," said a thin, labor-worn woman, meditatively turning all to her own theme, "'t there has to be a parchment drawn out an' signed over every little livin' act. I took the clo'es home to Mis' Orton's rusticater over to the Crumples, an' she paid me for washin' an' ironin' of 'em. 'Can you resute the bill?' says she. 'I've done the washin' an' got my money, and you've got your clo'es back, 'ain't you?' says I. 'Yes,' says she. 'Wal', that ends it,' says I. 'I ain't in the habit of givin' nor takin' affadavits every breath I draw.'"

This monetary idea suggested a wail on the part of a sturdy mariner. "Taxes is gettin' so 't a man

UNDER A TOPIC

'most thinks sometimes o' sellin' out his house and goin' cruisin' for good 'n' all."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen," we murmured, responsively.

"It appears," insinuated Elder Fyrando, "'t the one under the topic o' the 'Valley o' Bones' is not present. Did Dorna leave any word what was the next topic?"

"'Who and What was Asshur?'" spoke up Tilly, referring to a strip of paper which she drew from her pocket.

"Is the one under the topic of 'Who and What was Asshur' present?" said the elder.

This new proposition in its unyielding and technical definiteness pierced us like an arrow. Mrs. Temple, with the utmost good feeling, had an unsafe sense of the humorous. Margaret touched her deftly either with foot or elbow, and she gave, in response to the signal, a peculiar little laugh of her own, so helpless as to be almost an appeal, so soft as to be almost a sigh. Now my Infra sometimes laughed a trifle audibly in meeting, and this tenderly human reminder of her recalled me to my steadfast calling and to dare something for conscience' sake, however elementary and stammering.

"I think Asshur was a man," I said, rising; "he was—it was—either a field or a man—but never mind. There are enough things in the Bible to go by that do not need any explanation. There's a verse beginning, 'Be ye kind one to another.' Now I was not prepared on my topic, and these sisters of mine took the embarrassment quite away from me and stood up to give some experiences of their own in my place. 'Be ye kind one to another.' I know what that means, for I've been taught it largely here at the Bar. Infra—my wife—Infra—"

FLOOD-TIDE

"I know Infra always takes them simple texts," said Tilly, coming to my relief, "an' I love 'em myself alongside o' my own childern, like 'Come unto me all ye that labors and is heavy laden,' an' 'Him that saveth his life shall lose it, but him that loseth it for me, he shall save it,' an' 'In my father's house be many mansions; ef it wasn't so, I'd told ye.' But Dorna says the's some parts o' the Bible been turribly neglected, an' them texts that's most fit sheer of she thinks we'd ought to look 'em straight in the eye an' do what we kin for 'em."

Emboldened by this exhortation, the light of a crucial analysis was thrown upon much hitherto recondite Scriptural matter, and Elder Fyrando's countenance took on an expression of placid triumph.

"I shall now have the pleasure of dismissing this meeting," said he, "hoping that we shall all try this week to keep the commandments right up to the handle. Them settin' nearest the door, of course, has the first right to stompede."

I helped Aunt Rocksey Tate down from the school-house door. There had once been an intervening step there—a stone—which the boys had lugged away for a trick, and no counter-facetiousness had ever replaced it. Rocksey was a mature, weighty creature, short of limb; her usual manner of descending was to sit down and sound for *terra firma* with her feet, just as her manner of climbing up was an entire relinquishment to naïve and childish methods. Now, she put both arms around my neck and yielded her whole person to me as if for rescue at the brink of a precipice.

I heard Mrs. Temple's soft, helpless laugh again, and, having safely landed Rocksey, held out my

UNDER A TOPIC

hand to her; she stepped down, not ungracefully, and Margaret made an easy descent.

It was a lofty post of observation at the school-house. I had seen, meanwhile, Dr. Saxe with Alpena in the yacht's dory, pulling lazily towards the shore; the big frame and golden beard, and Alpena's slender red jacket, the oars shedding diamonds in the sunlight.

I glanced at Margaret's proud face and saw, for an instant, a look there that wrung my heart with pity. It would not have seemed so thrilling—that sudden, downcast pallor—that expression (borne for an instant only, because she was proud) on some countenance accustomed to humiliation and pain.

"Our little sprite has been off for a sail," she said, gayly, "while we have been giving proper observance to the day. Well, who can blame her? I think I will walk home with you, Mrs. Temple," she added, in the same buoyant tone. "I am never in haste to leave the Bar."

I knew the master of the yacht might search as best he could for his fine lady; she would not be found waiting for any derelict feet.

"Our little sprite has been off for a sail," Margaret had said. "Who can blame her?" But Alpena was a girl five feet and eleven inches in height, with firm, strong shoulders, and a face that one like Dr. Saxe had never quite finished studying. She was behaving villanously since *Infra* went away. I blamed her, though I knew her wilful, untamed heart was pure. She had been so much with us—with *Infra* and me—she had so often devoured the special portion of pie reserved for me—I meant, by family rights, to make an appeal to her for Margaret's sake.

FLOOD-TIDE

So I followed the red jacket on its homeward way to the Narrows; this bridle-path lay through the woods—a way shorter by two miles than that by the winding shore, and beautiful with its dense shade and moss-covered rocks. The tripping feet of the long-limbed girl were well in advance of me when I entered the wood, but I was approaching by long strides, when I was conscious of other feet at my side, bare and black—the feet of Johnny Bowles—in steady companionship. This was his legitimate highway, too, rather than mine, as his home was at the Narrows.

“Don’t mind waiting to walk with me, Everywhere,” I said. “Boys love to run—run home as fast as you like.”

“Oh, I ain’t in no hurry, cap’n,” said little Everywhere, reassuringly.

I knew that Alpena was mischievously enjoying my predicament, although she had never once turned her head, bounding on with her light step. I could not make grave and confidential discourse with her with this long-eared youngster at my side; his mouth would be wide with interest to hear that women should be kind to one another, and that she by her childish caprice was giving Margaret Langthorne deep pain.

I waited until we should be out of the wood and I could see Alpena at home. As we emerged into the pasture and climbed towards the bluffs, there met us, with the strong wind which always prevailed there, the vision of a prancing horse tied to a fir-tree. It was young Dunbar’s horse, and he was within the house waiting for Alpena—he, with her reckless father, who would almost have sold that fair vision of a girl for gold, I believed. Yet in one sense I did

UNDER A TOPIC

not fear for her. She was dexterous. Whatever wild path she took would be of her own choosing.

Johnny paused, round-eyed, to see what I would do.

"Don't ye like to have Tyr'lese Dunbar courtin' Alpy?" he inquired, mysteriously, himself evincing deep satisfaction at the valiant glory of this suitor's horse. "Harl an' Arch ain't got pennies to his pounds, an' he told her father how 't he'd take an' marry her."

"You are a sad little gossip, Everywheres."

"What? Say, the big doctor with the yacht—he's begun courtin' of her, too."

"That is not true. You are a wretched little gossip."

Johnny never showed offence; his curiosity was too absorbing; his eyes were fastened on me now with greedy hunger for intelligence from another quarter: "Say, Cap'n Alfred, the Bar says you've been as mis'able as a coot with its head shot off ever sence Mis' Cap'n Alfred went away."

"Well, that is true."

"Ye liked gittin' married, didn't ye?" said he, with a really kindly grin, as beautiful as a smile can be where the absence of the front teeth makes a dark and whistling void. "Dinny Gleeson an' me ain't never go'n' to git married, *though*. Din says he's go'n' to hire Aunt Nag, ur somebody like that, ter keep house for him. He says this gittin' married is mean business, raisin' up a lot o' mis'able little boys ter make 'em churn, an' peel their skin off with sand-soap, Sundays."

"Well," said I, "I came for a stroll, and I'm going back home to the Bar. So good-bye, Johnny."

"Ye didn't come for no stroll, *though*," continued

FLOOD-TIDE

my companion, with a sympathy as intense as it was relentless. "Ye come to scold Alpy Marlow for goin' sailin' in the yacht with that doctor feller—that's what ye come for."

"Farewell, Everywheres. May Heaven kindly teach you in due time not to make yourself so ubiquitous."

He received this remark without either enlightenment or regret, and, having previously stated Alpena's romantic situation to the full, in the most craven terms of an unsentimental boyhood, he was silent.

But when I was almost out of sight, I heard his voice shouting roundly, "Here's—hopin'!—Cap'n—Alfred."

"Here's hoping!" I sent back—for no inhabitant of the Bar ever under any circumstances refused an answer to that invocation.

X

CONVERSATION HEARTS AND AN EXPLOSION



LOVE society dearly," said Mrs. Captain Abram Shale, "but it does mess up a body's floor!"

We who were calling upon her at the time did not know whether to feel most flattered or crestfallen at these words. There was a sticky fog outside, of which our boots had brought in some vivid impressions, which she was now trying earnestly to obliterate with her broom.

"D'ye think it's polite, mother, to sweep up people's tracks afore their very eyes?" gently remonstrated Captain Shale; his tone of its abundance never roared nor sank to pettishness. He had been accustomed to regard the garnished interior of his dwelling very gingerly; but Mrs. Temple was a boarder—that implied sacred rights—and she played euchre with Captain Shale; hence, under the shadow of her wing, he had taken confidence and much expanded recently amid the spotless rigors of his own domain.

Some sea-furniture blazed on the hearth, for even in midsummer and with open windows, evening at the Bar was always mitigated by this sort of fire.

"I'll tell ye what I think, Abram," said Mrs. Shale, "sence you ask me. I think 'twould be better if you

FLOOD-TIDE

was chargin' your mind with some industries for to-morrow than to set there gamblin'."

"I don' need to charge my mind with them old industries, ma," continued the captain, faithfully shuffling the cards; "them old tracks 't I been over an' over, year arter year, ef I should lose ary wit I got I sh'd pursue them old industries jest from sheer force o' habit, ma."

"Wal', 't least I'd show respect enough for Mis' Temple to go an' gear my neck up with a collar."

"She aint so pucker-struck as you be, ma. Be you pucker-struck?" said Captain Abram, addressing Mrs. Temple, seriously, with a charming smile, and indicating by half rising a willingness to go and put on a collar if she were suffering under the malady alluded to.

"No, captain, I'm not in the least pucker-struck," she answered, cheerfully.

"Then I won't hariss myself up with no neck yoke," said he. There was so little feverishness in his manner of dealing the cards that during the actual process the millers, flying in from the night, lit unalarmed on his fingers and thumbs and even slept there.

Mrs. Temple was equally placid. She was supplied with a parcel of "conversation hearts"—the prevailing confection at the Bar—which were freely distributed among us. These sweets were engraved with a vocabulary fitted to almost every touching or sentimental emergency in life.

"Don't be a wall-flower." Alpena searched for two specimens bearing this design and tossed them over to Harlan and Arch. Arch, who was merry under normal circumstances, was fortified with a rejoinder. "May I see you home, love?" was inscribed on the sugar he flung back to her.

CONVERSATION HEARTS

She blushed, with a low, heedless laugh; she had some dainty quivering muscles in her chin that made an accompaniment as of mute stringed instruments to her lightest word or smile. Tall as she was, she could curl herself up like a child, and she had a gift of royal feminine self-esteem which larger education or opportunity could hardly have increased in her. She was conscious that whomsoever she caressed, or even slapped, was blessed.

She sat on the arm of Mrs. Temple's chair, and her flirtation by means of the candy hearts sometimes interfered with that lady's eyes or nose or hair, in an unceremonious fashion, but Mrs. Temple only put up a hand tenderly to the witch.

"One girl is a whole girl, two girls is half a girl, and three girls is no girl," said Mrs. Shale; "but Harlan and Arch has only got one girl between 'em, and there's rich Tyrolese Dunbar after ye too, Alpy, and they say there's another now—Dr. Marg'et Langthorne's beau."

The blackness of the girl's eyes gave a wicked gleam; her hair was smoothed from her forehead like a nun's.

"I wish ye had a mother, Alpena," said Mrs. Shale. "Wal'," she added, sighing, "but so 'tis as 'tis, and it can't be no 'tiser."

"I don' like to interrump' the conversation, but I guess I will jest long enough to ask ye what ye think o' the trump?" interpolated Captain Abram, gently drawing the attention of Mrs. Temple to that ignored object, which in this instance was represented by the queen of hearts, with a battered crown and one eye gone. "I don' know why 'tis," said he, with a rich undertone of hope, "but I allas has special luck when that partick'lar trump turns up."

FLOOD-TIDE

"I'm sure you will again, captain, I've such a wretched hand." Here Alpena bent over Mrs. Temple and straightened her nose-glasses for her, deliberately shutting off for the time being all vision of the game. "Did you hear what Aunt Sylphy said just now?" she murmured. "She said, 'So 'tis as 'tis, and it can't be no 'tiser.'" Gurgling laughter from the girl, and the woman's soft, helpless response in kind.

"It's a true sayin', as you'll find, Alpy," said Mrs. Captain Shale. "Life has a meanin' 't you know very little of as yet. 'Deep calleth unto deep,' as you'll find, Alpy Marlow," she added, with earnest and simple dignity. For one thing, this euchre-playing in her house, she had begun to feel of late, could be condoned or redeemed only by the strict application of some serious measures on her part. She took down a book from the shelf and seated herself very close to her life-partner's elbow. "I'll read to you, Abram," said she, "from Paul's letter to the Cossolonians."

But right here she heard a tapping at the shed door and went to answer it.

"Wal', excuse me for mentionin' of it ag'in, Mis' Temple, but how do ye like the trump?" inquired Captain Abram, mildly and firmly.

"Oh, let me tell you what to lead." Alpena seized Mrs. Temple's cards and studied them with a flourish. "Here!"—she handed her an ace of clubs whose setting had been deeply incarnadined in the past by intimacy with some crushed wild strawberries—"lead that!"

Another neighbor entered at this point, glowing with much excitement and bearing a print in radiant colors. "Look!" she exclaimed, "sent, jest as they

CONVERSATION HEARTS

promised, with two bars o' 'Venus's La'ndry Soap.' I'm goin' to git it framed." As she held the picture before us we gazed upon an allegory, the interpretation of which—"Beware of the Cup"—was printed in vivid characters at its base. On the brink of a waterfall, sprayless in its intensity of blue, hung suspended a boat; in the boat was a man standing erect and gaudily trim, and gazing with a smile of flippant unconcern at the doom awaiting him, while angels, just emerged from a toilet of yellow ochre, stretched towards him a chorus of arms.

"Don't it contain a beautiful thought?" said the woman, holding it up triumphantly. "'Beware o' the Cup.'"

"I should call it 'Beware o' goin' over the mill-dam,'" said Captain Shale, regarding it for an instant with serious practical attention, "or 'Beware o' them yaller women reachin' out there ter grab his hair.' I don' know which I should call it."

His smile was never bitter. He picked up a cinnamon heart, boldly bearing on its face the inscription, "You are my darling," broke it in two without observing its title, and put one half in his mouth.

"Oh, captain," said Alpena, "do you know what you have in your mouth?"

"I can guess," said Captain Shale, genially. "I got *Darlin'* in my mouth prob'bly. It's on most of 'em. It tastes dretful spicy and nice! *Darlin'*. My, it's dretful sweet!" Of all the wicked people in the room, there was scarcely one more depraved than Captain Shale.

"Abram," said his wife, "I sometimes think you're only just puttin' on the form o' godliness."

"I don't deny it, mother." He tenderly brushed away a miller which had dropped from his thumb to

FLOOD-TIDE

the remaining half of the cinnamon heart, and again addressed Mrs. Temple with resignation and sweetness.

"Wal', I s'pose we can allude to the game once 'n a while. Are ye satisfied with the trump?"

"Perfectly," she answered, and led out a card now with attentive seriousness.

"I wish 't some r'al exper'enced married folks had been around to advise Paul a little when he wrote his 'pistle to wives an' husban's," the woman with the picture interrupted Mrs. Shale, who had begun to read aloud. "*Though* he was a learned man, that was a subject he hadn't looked into in the only way 't fetches any r'al knowledge of it."

"I take the Bible platform just as it comes," said Mrs. Shale to her guest with distinct reproof. She leaned nearer the captain's ear and raised her voice clearly. "I will read to you, Abram, from the 'pistle to the Cossolonians."

"Ma," said Captain Abram, quite firmly though with unruffled gentleness, "the's a place for every-thing and everything in its place. I ain't a-listenin' to Scripiter now. I'm a-gamblin'."

Mrs. Shale gave a sigh that actually put some of the millers to flight. Still other callers were arriving, and their boots were tracking her floors. She rose—she was a tall, handsome woman, with an expression of singular sweetness—took her broom, and proceeded to sweep in a dustless, genteel, conscientious manner that imputed no blame to her guests, but seemed rather to impress us as with the grace of some subtle compliment.

Alpena had gone over to a chair between Harlan and Arch, and was behaving herself as a lady should, conversing with them easily, though demurely.

CONVERSATION HEARTS

She had a loitering, indefinitely long way of relating any little anecdote, but the two young men were quite indifferent as to her delayed climaxes so long as they could sit there and watch her.

"Harlan," said Mrs. Captain Shale, giving him a glance of motherly professional interest as she swept the dim corner where he was situated, "ye look as woful as though ye'd been night-hakin' and a bat had lit on yer bowsprit."

"Do I?" rejoined the dull Harlan, in a matter-of-fact way.

Alpena's eyes fell. She knew that people were suffering on her account. Her thin hands lay quietly in her lap. This lack of flesh, as though she were wasting, combined with her tireless agility and superior stature, had a singular effect; people had a way of looking up to her and of longing to save her from dissolution at the same time.

Arch, her playfellow from childhood, picked up one of the slender hands wonderingly and delicately. It lay along his brawny palm like some helpless leaf driven there.

"It looks like thistle-down lodged ag'in' a bowlder, Alpy," he said.

She did not withdraw her hand, only regarding the contrast as he did, and answering him with a frank smile.

Arch had on his black broadcloth: antiquity as well as elegance had breathed from these garments when he made his first appearance in them; the Bar had never seen them new, though it had watched their steady decline from the original ruin. They were fatefully becoming. The young man had those features, patrician, Adonis-like, never seen in such perfection as when embodied in some wild

FLOOD-TIDE

shoot of the wilderness or sea. His eyes had a gentle fire, sun-bright, but all for warmth and joy. And Alpena liked him dearly, but she did not love him. He knew that.

Harlan would never have dreamed of taking her hand. It was right—it was inspiration—for Arch to do so, he thought. Harlan had the steadiest boat along shore, a model cottage designed and raised by his own labors, and money in the bank. He was comely, too, in his own grave fashion. Alpena liked him well, but she did not love him. He knew that. The sadness of the woman half veiled her eyes at times, for she knew that they suffered for her.

“Ef I’d only ‘a’ swung,” exclaimed Captain Shale from the other end of the room, “I’d ‘a’ got the trick!”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Temple, “if you had only swung!”

Still, it appeared that he was winning, though not to the extent he might have done by measures more desperately bold. Mrs. Temple had a matchless skill, not only in losing the game, but in wearing an air of mild sorrow over persistent vanquishment.

“I’m sorry to skunk ye the way I been a-doin’,” said the captain, with a manner that was not merely gallant—it was full of feeling. “Wal’, I’ve known what it was to be skunked myself,” he told her, again shuffling the cards, amid the languid hovering of millers dropping to renew their rest.

It was at this moment that a tapping was heard at the window outside. Mrs. Shale’s visage was discovered there, pale, distorted with excitement; her finger was frantically beckoning us out.

“Wal’, what is the matter now, ma?” said Captain

CONVERSATION HEARTS

Shale, holding a defective knave of spades suspended in air.

"Didn't ye see me empty the dustpan of litter into the fire jest now? I don't know as they fell where they'd ketch right away. Ye know I've been sweep-in', and it was sort of shadowy over by the rack, and I forgot about your spillin' them cartridges, Abram, but after I'd dumped the litter into the fire, I remembered—"

"Good Lord! ma." We fled.

In speaking of the affair afterwards, "I never," said Captain Shale, "took up my moorin's quicker." With reference to the gait assumed by the rest of us, "I never," he was accustomed to say, "see sech a bramblin'!"

As far as the immediate event was concerned, no celerity could have been too opportune. Thunderbolt after thunderbolt followed in rapid succession. Then the boys went in and extinguished the fire, and we gazed upon a scene of smoke, ashes, and general disruption.

"Wal', ma, about everything in the room's been shot, I guess," observed Captain Shale, philosophically; "the clock's got two bullets in her face, and the photograph alberm jest missed my ear when she come through the windy. Wal', we'd ought to be thankful."

"I don't see what the' is to be thankful for," said Mrs. Shale. "Look at my floor!"

"Why, I guess everybody here is thankful to ye, ma, for rememb'rin' about them cattridges jest when ye did. Ef it had slippened yer mind jest a second longer the'd likely 'a' been somethin' asides the furniture hit. It's the most fortunite thing I ever heered of, ma, the recollections of how ye dumped them cat-

FLOOD-TIDE

tridges into the fire comin' across yer mind jest when it did."

Mrs. Shale looked unutterably doubtful of any good where a once immaculate floor presented such an appearance as hers.

"But ye r'a'ly had ought, mother," continued Captain Shale, reflectively, "to 'a' hollered to the rest of us on yer way out, 'stead o' waitin' to git 'way outside and explain it all through the windy with us a-settin' inside."

"I know it, Abram," said she, "but my legs hove me out without no kind of consentin' actions on my part. I *had* to go jest as quick as I did go."

"And ye took sech a long time explainin' of it, mother; goin' into all the pertickalers as ef we wa'n't, all the rest of us, a-settin' there unknowin' on the touch-hole o' perdition."

"Then don't set there no longer, ef that's the case, Abram," said Mrs. Shale, solemnly; "but rise up and git prepared and have your lamp trimmed and burnin'."

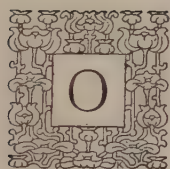
"'Pears to me, mother, the most important lesson to draw from it is to be kind o' keerful hereafter not to set our cattridges burnin'."

Alpena was still trembling, with a bloodless face. Harlan could have worshipped her, but he never thought of touching her. But Arch took her hand in his warm one and then drew it through his arm. "You help her the other side, Harl," he said. "We'll see Alpy safe home."

Harlan smiled openly, kindly, through the white habit of renunciation that had grown upon his face. "I'll trust that to you, Arch. I'll stay an' help the folks here git things to rights."

XI

"LET THAT SHEET OFF!"



ON the last occasion when I sailed over to Whale Harbor to see Infra, Dinsmore and Dorna both freely volunteered their company. To embark with those two was to become obliterated from any active partnership in affairs and to watch a panorama gusty and changeful as the restless sea.

In the first place, Dorna found it necessary to reprove her son at the breakfast-table, where he was, indeed, registering his system with an abnormally provident supply in view of the day's excursion.

"You quit forelaying on the vittles, Dinsmore. I sh'd think you was calkalatin' on a trip to the North Pole! Five hard-boiled eggs an' six muffins is enough to carry any little chickweed o' your size over to Whale Harbor."

Dinny appeared a hard-boiled case himself. Now, in the zenith of July, he wore a heavy fur cap—for some mysterious reason his chief love in life—and was otherwise noticeably bare.

"Now you go and put on your whole pair o' trousers and your shoes and stockin's!"

"I ain't go'n' to be harissed up with them gear in summer no day except Sunday."

Dinsmore spoke from the firm ground of custom,

FLOOD-TIDE

reason, and religion. Dorna recognized the impregnability of his position, and shifted her own boldly.

"Wal', then, you go set yourself down to the churn and fetch that butter afore we sail. I'd get myself behind some objec', ef I wanted to go prancin' around as near naked as the law 'll allow. I never see sech a half-breed!"

Dinsmore was an embryo man; he walked to the churn sturdily and accepted his task. "If I'm a half-breed 'tain't my fault, ma," he chirped to his mother from the whirling handle of his fortress.

"I said a half-bake!" declared Dorna, again fervently tacking; but she realized the dimensions of her boy's brain with wonder, and in fact there was never a more precocious captain of his age and size than Dinsmore Gleeson.

The mother now set about her own preparations with that clamor which, when interrupted by events, was still so dominant and loud as to appear majestically to guide those very events.

"Anybody's coon-cat!" she cried, affectionately snatching a quadruped of that description to her bosom and walking the floor with it. "Anybody's own-ty coon! Own-ty coon!" The ungrateful nursling, desiring the remnants from the breakfast-table more than the warblings of love, lifted its paw and scratched Dorna. She promptly opened the cellar door and thrust it downward.

"Tarry there, you frowzly-tailed serpent!" she exclaimed, shutting the door; and, weighing the other cats of the household in the same measure of moral insufficiency, she began to scatter them right and left.

"I never in my life see sech harissments. Every

tap and turn, I step on a cat.” She threw two out of the window as she spoke. “Here I be runnin’ and racin’ to get ready to go on a cruise, and I’ve got to be all harissed up balin’ out cats!” Here her hand fell upon a smaller living object, and she lifted it tenderly.

“Who did you calkulate to take care of your dove, Dinsmore, while you was gone?”

Next to his fur cap, Dinsmore fostered his dove. He looked up at it wistfully. “I’ll take it over to grappy.”

“Is the butter fetching, little son?”

“No, course not—when I want to go cruisin’. It’s thin as ever.”

Dorna lifted the cover of the churn. “For the love of Aaron! Dinsmore Gleeson, have you been churn-in’ all this time on water? It’s the water I put in to souze out the churn. The cream ain’t been put in. You *are* a blossom worth raisin’!”

“How many times ye told me, ma, never to lift the cover o’ the churn? How many times ye licked me for liftin’ the cover and lookin’ in?”

“’Twa’n’t that I reproved ye for, so much as ’twas for pawin’ and investigatin’ around in the cream with that little mud-crusted tabernacle o’ yourn, jest to find out the hidden secrets o’ how cream gits turned into butter.”

“Wal’, my tabernacle’s goin’ down to board the boat,” said Dinsmore, with the decision of an admiral. “I’ve been under pet’coat gov’ment long enough for one mornin’. Yer old cream can keep cool till to-morrer. It’s high water, and Captain Alfred’s waitin’.” He took up his dove and went.

Dorna, enraptured that she should have given birth to a being of such perspicacity, proceeded to

FLOOD-TIDE

consummate her own affairs. She went up-stairs, put her purse in the toe of an unused shoe, according to the custom of the Bar when needing recourse to a safe-deposit vault, and closed the wardrobe door thereon—the door had no lock. In leaving the cottage, however, she locked the front door ostentatiously—the back entrance held no such worldly and forbidding bar against society—hung the key by the long string attached to it on the lattice-work of the piazza, where it dangled trustfully, the most prominent object in view of the lane.

Thus secure against the incursions of the wicked, we sallied down to the boat. Dinsmore had left his dove in trust and was there before us, already master of the craft. Dinsmore—it was an accepted fact at the Bar—never set foot in a boat but that he became at once captain, pilot, and Lord High Admiral thereof.

“Why didn’t ye have yer big boat here, Cap’n Alfred? I can manage her all right.”

“I know. I thought it would be easier for you to sail the *Pod* over.”

“The *Pod*’s a trig little piece o’ timber. The’s nothin’ this side the bot’mless pit ’ll upset her.”

“Dinsmore Gleeson,” said Dorna, “the’s one thing your smartness has got to stop short of. When I hear about the bottomless pit it’s goin’ to be from older lips than that little mouth o’ yourn pouched out like a wolf’s cub’s nose. I’ve handled you now eleven years with an easy rope, and I’m afraid I’m reapin’ the rewards of it.”

Dorna herself was a skilled sailor, as were all the women of the Bar. She was bursting with admiration of her child; yet her conscience bade her be as a monitor over him, and she maintained that position firmly.

“LET THAT SHEET OFF!”

The mother and son, one at the sail and the other at the rudder, entered into a prolonged and warlike discussion during the first few miles as to the various technicalities of wind and tide and the best adaptation of means to meet them. The argument grew so heated that I beheld Dorna with the dip-net thrown over her head by her son—our captain. Emerging from this temporary obscurity, she threatened him with an oar. She was a beautiful woman, and as she rose in the stern of the boat brandishing this uplifted wand, a majestic sense of maternal duty sitting on her features, she looked like some fair empress of the sea.

I settled the difficulty between the two with honeyed words applied to the nautical skill of both, to the effect that I never felt safer than when under their direction and espionage of the mighty deep. Dorna seated herself again and laid down her oar. Such clear utterances as these alone pierced the air:

“Let that sheet off! A fair wind and your sheet flat aft!” from Dorna, in derision.

“Can’t ye see that I’m jibin’ her, ma? I can’t be under pet’coat gov’ment when I’m out to sea, or I should run afoul of every rock between the Crumples and Pidgin Bluffs.”

“If we don’t get a different captain aboard this boat we shall hear the Beel Islanders singin’!”

This implied death—no less. The drowning were supposed to hear the Beel Islanders sing, and that with enchanting sweetness.

“What talk that is, ma! Can’t ye see I’m luffin’ her to ketch the wind?”

Here, by some too-daring and original experiment of Dinsmore’s at the prow, the sail fell over and floated broadside on the water.

FLOOD-TIDE

"Here's an aspect!" cried Dorna. "I should think, Dinsmore Gleeson, 't you'd been brought up, up country, on punkins!"

"Accidents happens to all seamen. If I was your husband, ma, I should want to go kill myself."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen! I've a good mind to lay you across my lap and administer some o' the same kind o' parley voo 't I used to lay on to you in infancy, you little polygamist, you."

"A polygamist's one 't 's got a lot o' wives, ain't it, ma?"

"Yes."

"Wal', I may be the worst things ever heered tell on, but I sha'n't never be no polygamist, ma. You set your mind easy on that."

The two fished for the sail assiduously. I watched with hopeful interest. I did not fear for Dinsmore and his mother on the deep. They were children petted, tended by the elements.

"You're h'istin' with too short a gaff, ma."

"Never mind that. Do you consider the aspect we make out here in mid-ocean fishin' for our own sail!"

"Ma, I'd just about as soon punish out a Sunday on land as to go cruisin' with you ary day o' the week."

"I can tell you one thing, little son, the's more mess-o'-pottage Esaus than the' is Isaacs anywheres around where you be."

Assisted somewhat by the virility of this vocal exercise, our sail was reinstated, and we bounded on our voyage.

"I told ye the wind was goin' to breeze, ma."

"Look to your sail, will you? or you'll take us up into the very beginnin's o' latitude!"

“LET THAT SHEET OFF!”

“Hi! but this is a free wind!” Dinsmore exulted.

“Look to your sail!” cried Dorna. “How she’s worryin’!”

“No, she’s only jest snortin’ to ketch this puff, ma. Hi!”

The free wind continued, and we dashed at last, like a panting runaway, into the waters of Whale Harbor.

XII

LEE SHORE



INFRA had spied our boat and stood waiting at the door. We hastened to her; she took no step to us. The absorption of life in voluntary service to the most unfortunate gave her a dignity unconscious and beyond that of all superficial schools; yet when we looked into her eyes we realized again the depth of her loyal tenderness.

This singular personality was hers—most marked under the stanch bearing of the weariest burdens—humanity, even the most vigorous and well poised, seemed feverish beside her.

I thought she would at once have taken me apart for some words with her alone, but between her attentions to the sick woman and her kindly reception of Dorna, she led me only to the little porch, where poor Nirk was drearily weaving a net.

"I want you to sit down here and cheer him up a bit, Alfred," she murmured to me, in a low tone.

"I cannot cheer him up. Infra, I have so much to tell you—"

"Let him tell his troubles over to you then, while you listen."

"I did not come over to listen to Nirk's troubles, dearest," I whispered to her. "I came to see you.

LEE SHORE

I want to talk with you alone. Come over to the beach."

She smiled, but pressed me gently to a chair near the afflicted man, and left us in answer to a plaintive call from the bedroom. I looked after her with a thrill of adoration. Margaret had never seemed so inaccessible.

"This is lee shore," said Nirk, looking seaward commiseratingly, and at the same time politely entering into conversation; "the' ain't but a little flop to the water here."

"Yes, it's a fine harbor."

"Did you see how I'd had Beth's picture enlarged?" He left his net and brought out from the "parlor" a showily framed crayon copy, wh ch he set up before us and resumed his work. "I wanted to have that—if she goes."

Nirk was a simple creature, whose head had been half turned by his wife's illness. Any way without her was an unaccustomed way, and he staggered mentally.

"She won't go, I believe, Nirk."

"If she don't I'll jine to any church they want me to jine to—I will! I'll do more than respect religion. The' was a passenger once 'board the *Heron* used to swear all day an' plump down afore us all ter say his prayers at night. We told him to quit. We told him we'd always respected religion, though we didn't want nothin' else to do with it; but one or the other had got to stop—either prayin' or swearin'; the' wa'n't both goin' on aboard that boat. But I'll do more than respect religion if Beth gits up again."

"Good," I said, in some bewilderment.

"I don't believe God A'mighty 'll take her and leave me here in this world forestanding! If he does

FLOOD-TIDE

I don't never want to see home again. I'll sell out, and cruise till my call comes." His lips trembled; the man's eyes were of that clear, guileless blue more pathetic than the tear-stained sockets of woe.

"But she is better, Nirk?"

"Sure. Sure," he answered, hastily. "Ye know the baby came?"

"No. I have scarcely seen my wife."

"Yes, but 'twas born dead, and her heart broke over it. Then the fever come on, and left her so sudden the doctor said he never see the like; but with it she left off worryin' and cryin'; she didn't seem to care much about ary thing, 'cept to want Infry near; and she don't talk to her o' no loss or trouble, but it's all joy an' unconsarn, an' she's got folks 't's died all mixed up with the livin', and times I hear her laughin' jest as she used to when I come home with her from singin'-school. Infry—she's an angel to her; she's an angel on 'arth—Infry is. I'm glad she's got prospects."

"What?"

"Yes, the women folks was sayin' she'd got prospects, too. I hope you'll have better luck than ourn."

I forgot Nirk's grief—all grief. I looked forward to speech with my wife again as a lover waits. Nirk, with his sorrow-dazed and defeated face, worked on.

"I like ter watch a gang o' childern in times o' trouble; they don't sense no fear to it. Infry says they sees true. They goes right along with their witch work," he added, drawing my attention with a faint smile to what we of the Bar would have called an "aspect" approaching down the lane. It was Dinsmore at the head of four of the Harbor boys, all seated in line on the back of a horse almost original

LEE SHORE

in his grewsome features of unkempt poverty and dejection.

The boys wore an air of regal gravity, and thus formidably massed looked ahead with determination.

"I fear Dinsmore is at the bottom of that," I said, rising to relieve the over-officered beast.

"Let 'em witch, let 'em witch," said Nirk, indifferently. "Jim's old hoss won't go no farther' n the pool."

Dinsmore, at the prow as usual, sawed on the worn bridle-bit in vain. The horse pursued his passionless, hopeless, undeviating way to the spring whence he was accustomed to slake his thirst. There was a steep though brief declivity, comprising about the length of his frame; and thus as he bowed his head, with his fore-feet at the edge of the water, and his hind-feet on the hill-top, his body formed an imminent chute or precipice, down which the boys shot swiftly one by one into the pool.

The sad animal expressed no surprise, nor even owned to any knowledge of this untoward event, but drank on gluttonously.

The five heads were lifted in dripping unison.

Dinsmore's feelings were wounded tragically; his knee had struck against a sharp stone: stout little fellow though his habit was, he was humiliated, bleeding; for the instant he gave way to audible lamentation.

"You walk yourself here!" called Dorna from the doorway. "It ain't enough that you can sail ary boat you lay your hand to and boss the whole Bar, but the minute you get over here to the Harbor you got to go to playin' off Ulysses S. Grant, or some other great piece o' business."

FLOOD-TIDE

"I wa'n't!" Dinsmore screamed back at her wrathfully.

"What was you a-doin' of?"

In fact his original design had been the impersonating of Paul Revere, but the ambition fell with his tears into the water at his feet.

Infra came down the path and took the little man in her arms. I intercepted her and bore our master of craft to the porch, where she took him in her lap and dressed his wounds, physical and mental.

He put up both brawny little arms and clung to her. Now and then, behind his wrinkles of world-experience and nautical hardship, the baby dimpled or wept. So now, against Infra's breast, his tear-wet face smoothed into the trustfulness and innocence of infancy; her quietness charmed him; he fell asleep.

Nirk had left his weaving. I was alone with Infra. I took her hand and drew near to her eyes, and between us there was that look which I wait for again as my heaven and home-light in eternity.

"You must leave this place now," I said. "I shall find a competent nurse for them here and take you away within two days—within two days, mind. Make your preparations and be ready. I have so much to tell you, dearest."

I laid my hand on hers to still a little my own eager thought. Her face, bowed over the sleeping boy, was content and incurious as his own.

"You are not the only one who has kept a secret, love," I went on. "I have told no one at the Bar—I did not mean to tell you, Infra, just at present—I was so happy in our simple, toiling life while you were there with me. But now that you will have such care—now that there may be another for us to care for—I want to tell you—it gives me joy to tell

LEE SHORE

you—we are not poor, *Infra*. I have been looking out for my affairs the while. We are not poor after all, love.”

I looked into her face joyously. She lifted her clear eyes to mine.

“What difference does it make?”

“What difference?”

“To the saints, *Alfred*. You remember, we are to work with our hands. We are to care for the sick. With all our power we are to help those who need. I am glad, *Alfred*, for we can do more. But what difference does it make with our living?”

“The saints must be reasonable, *Infra*.” I held her hand tenderly. I spoke with some impatience. “You owe duties to me and to—the child. You are beautiful. You are divine. But I claim the right now to guard—to care for you as I judge wisest.”

She did not controvert my impetuous tone. There was a brief silence. Against this dull lee shore the waves lapped faintly. The miscreant *Dinsmore* lay tranquil on her breast. Then—

“You saw *Beth*, *Alfred*,” said my wife, no reproach, no distress, her whole soul given to me in the tender smile in her eyes. “You saw her face, dear. You saw her hold to me. Do you wish me to leave her and send a stranger here in my place?”

I remembered, indeed, the premature deathlike wanness in the poor girl’s face—blight at life’s beginning. As I gazed into my wife’s eyes they grew wide, dark, deep as the ocean they had looked upon since childhood. The littleness of life shrank from before their infinity—the easeful, comfortable living, the inevitable forming crust of exclusiveness and selfishness when the hands cease to labor and

FLOOD-TIDE

the heart to give its blood, but only some droppings of cold silver from a faultless glove instead.

Her eyes had fascinated me. I hardly understood except that my own aims seemed paltry and for a fleeting day. Hers had the sanction of eternity. Hers was the reasonableness and mine the madness.

I rose and paced the little cottage porch. "I love you!" I said, coming back to her, kissing her hand with tears. "It is agony to me to think of your cares, of your breaking down physically perhaps under these hard, self-denying vigils, and to be separated from you now."

She drew me down beside her; my head fell near Dinsmore's own.

"I am a substantial woman," she laughed, "to hold two such infants. Do not fear for my health. It's only when we leave some path that we feel we ought to follow that we pine, Alfred."

"It is not so easy for all to be saints."

"Then take it hard, but be one." Her tone was even merry; but as I lifted myself and faced her I knew well how she missed her home, the roar of the greater tides, her own familiar ways—yes, and that poor heart of mine that loved her so.

"I must go now," she said. "Lift Dinsmore and lay him on the lounge."

Dinsmore woke; placid infancy changed to a countenance careworn, wrinkled, and sapient again. He scrambled disdainfully to his feet, yawned to cover his mortification, and thrust his hands in his tattered pockets.

"It's young flood-tide, Cap'n Alfred," said he.

"Yes, Captain Dinsmore."

"I'm sick o' this here shore. We orter be standin' out from harbor."

XIII

A CRUEL BUOY



MARGARET LANGTHORNE had sailed over from the Reach—not in the yacht, which was rather in banishment from her approval at present—to call upon Mrs. Temple—the “bookwriter,” as we fancifully called her at the Bar. Margaret had often been seeking her society of late, for Mrs. Temple attracted restlessness and sorrow to herself in some degree as my *Infra* did.

Arch lay napping among the nets, the sail-cloth, etc., piled along the piazza of Harlan’s house (the house that had been built for Alpena). In passing, Margaret stumbled over a net-buoy that had rolled into the lane, and, knowing them to be useful to the designers, and recognizing the mates of this one in the glance she gave towards the apparently humanly deserted piazza, she threw the wooden object thither.

Arch sprang up with dazed eyes and a gash in his cheek.

“Oh, you poor boy, forgive me!” cried the equally amazed lady physician. “I meant to restore the buoy. I did not see you.”

“No wonder,” he replied, in his genial, springing voice, trickling blood, a smile, and his white teeth all showing in unison. “Big as I be, I was clean stowed

FLOOD-TIDE

away by the nets. It's the very buoy," he continued, smiling more broadly, "that I threw away this morning because I'd wounded my thumb with it. It's an imperfect one, ye see. It's full o' splinters."

"In that case," said the doctor, removing her gloves, "let me see if there are any splinters lodged in your cheek. Sit down here. First, go and get me a basin of water."

She spoke coolly, professionally, as if she were treating any unfortunate being by the wayside, and she seated him on the piazza step in full view of the lane.

"Give me your handkerchief, young man—if it is an absolutely clean, unused one."

Arch fumbled in his pockets, and afraid, finally, of being suspected as without that necessary article, the poor boy—who had neither mother, sister, nor housekeeper—produced a piece of cloth unapproved by any fine quality and by cleanliness perhaps least of all.

The doctor did not touch it. "This will do very well," she said, whipping the spotless linen out of her own pocket. "Keep quite still now."

Arch was under a spell. He would hardly have murmured had those slender fingers with their subtle intimation of firmness and power severed his head from his body.

"Now, let me see the thumb that was wounded this morning."

Red as fire, Arch held up a great hand—a strained, scarred, blackened sailor's hand—the thumb increased to abnormal proportions by the convolutions of a dirty rag.

"It's all right, I guess," he said; "wounds heal up on me dreadful quick."

A CRUEL BUOY

Then—ah, wonder!—this fine lady, with a gown so exquisitely plain, and the freshness of her like a flower from a bath, with the learning in her black eyes, and the deft, hardly sensible touch of her fingers, began to undo that filth.

“I’ll take it off,” he hastened to say.

“Keep quite still,” she remarked, dipped the thumb in the water to relieve the dried blood, and then her face flushed. “Did you know no better than this? There are several pieces of wood left deep here in the flesh.”

“I did not know. I picked out all I could. But everything heals on me in no time at all,” rang out the hopeful voice.

“This would not heal without giving you a great deal of trouble,” she said, gravely, in a matter-of-fact way. She took a little case of instruments out of her pocket. “Now you must hold your thumb very still.”

“Oh, I’ll hold it still,” said Arch, torture being somehow converted into a species of bliss. The woman was older than he by some years; her whole life, with its atmosphere of mental and physical breeding so remote from his own, seemed to breathe sweet airs of the mysterious and ravishing about him now. His eyes rested on the pure line of her throat, the cool courage of her compressed, seemingly heartless lips.

He did not shrink from the probe, though he turned white as paper and even the fire in his brown eyes scattered wide for a moment, deluged with pain.

“You are a hero,” said she, the work done, tearing some strips from her handkerchief and binding the suffering thumb; “we will send you to the war. This poor maltreated thumb will get well now.”

FLOOD-TIDE

"So after all," said the bounding voice, "it was lucky you threw the buoy at me."

"Very lucky for you."

"I think so, too!" he cried.

She looked at him with a small, amused smile on her lips, which changed, as in contemplation of a child, into benevolent approval. He was over six feet in height, a creature swart, brawny, supple, and at the summit, naturally erect—not schooled—was reared the simple, sublime carving of his head and face.

"Why cannot civilization produce these absolutely correct physical types," thought the doctor, replacing the polished instrument in its case, "the ideally faultless, like this?" Dr. Norman Saxe was almost fat. She had been discovering of late some elements of weakness in his lovable, benign countenance. She gathered up her dress, walking away thoughtfully, forgetting her patient. He had not forgotten her.

But what to say? Arch would have been content if Alpena had married him; he would never have dreamed of affection for another woman. Accepted or rejected, the obtuse Harlan could not realize the existence of any other woman. But now, with his heart set adrift and ready to fall at the shrine of some sweet object, Arch found himself in the dust worshipping this woman of intellect and a profession. What to say to her! He caught up with her in the lane, his brain too happy and too dizzy for thought.

"Dr. Margaret—Dr. Langthorne—how much do I owe you?" He took a purse redolent of some dried fish-scales from his pocket.

"What they say here at the Bar, when asked that question," she replied, smiling, but evidently pre-

A CRUEL BUOY

occupied with her own train of thought—"love and good-will."

"Oh, I can love you hard enough," answered Arch, "never fear about that!"

Recalled to consciousness, she blushed violently and drew away from him in the path.

"Remember to whom you are speaking! I did you an act of kindness, as I would to—"

"Any one?"

"Yes—any needy object."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen," said he, in a tone of the deepest disappointment. "Well, can't you keep on being kind, anyway? And don't you be angry at being loved so all of a sudden. I can't help it! Nobody couldn't help it. Here's what's left of your pocket-handkerchief"—he folded it and tucked it ostentatiously next his heart; "you get that away from me if you can!"

Margaret leaned against a great boulder that flanked the lane and laughed until the tears came into her eyes. She was not prone to excessive laughter.

"You ridiculous creature, go back to your nets and go to sleep."

"You've woken me up for good." Instinctively he began to take pains with his grammar. His red-brown eyes illumined her with daylight and with starlight unabashed. "What makes you so queer at being loved? People can't help loving you. I wouldn't touch you with my little finger unless you let me."

She bit her lip as if repressing some further inclination to mirth. "I am a very unsuitable person for you to consider with such flattering regard, Mr.—a—a—"

FLOOD-TIDE

"Call me just Arch."

"Well, just Arch, you are an advent, I dare say? You seem to me decidedly an advent of the most striking order."

"No," he remonstrated, earnestly, "I am a saint."

"Will you please go back home, then, and be very careful of your thumb. You amuse me. You annoy me; but I am not so acrimonious that I wish to see you ascend within the next few days to the greater company, or, rather, see your cheerful frame given to the dust through blood-poisoning. And never speak to me again as you have done to-day."

She left him straightway.

"Well, anyway—here's hoping!" His buoyant voice was borne to her on the wind, still sweet and quite unvanquished even in dismissal.

Farther on, a little shock-headed figure that had been mousing among the bushes suddenly emerged and trotted patiently by Dr. Margaret's side.

"Arch has been makin' up to you, ain't he?" said Johnny Bowles. "Harl says Arch shall have his house if he ever gits married to anybody. Reck-on he'd give him his money, too, and go a-cruisin'," Johnny chirruped, whether at the thought of the house, the money, or the cruise. "What d' ye think?" he added.

"I think you are a little pest," said the doctor, smoothly, "and I advise you to run away and leave me."

Dr. Langthorne was not a favorite at the Bar. She surprised Captain Shale reclining among his farming implements and the wild carraway and climbing roses.

"Wal', ye look nateral," he saluted her, kindly,

A CRUEL BUOY

shuffling with some embarrassment into his slippers, which he had abandoned for temporary coolness and freedom; "ye look nateral."

"Is that a compliment?" she inquired. Her tone hardly did justice to the intelligence of her listener. "Is Mrs. Temple at home?"

"I reckon so. I'll walk along to the house with ye." This attention, which Mrs. Temple and I were accustomed to hail with pleasure, was rather a bore to Margaret. Captain Shale was, to her, a very common, ill-clad old man whom she was best pleased to observe at a distance.

Not discerning this, in his own greatness of soul, assuredly not resenting it, he offered to her silence, in his mild, rich voice, some of those few tenets of faith which were his.

"We allas feels cordial to anybody 't comes to the Bar. It don't make no difference where they comes from, nor whether they're rich or poor."

"You take a very unsafe basis for social operations, Captain Shale."

"Perhaps so. Perhaps I do. But, ye see, ef I happen to run up ag'in' a castaway—why, I been cast away myself, so I've got understandin's of it."

"What if you run up against a villain?"

"Them's the worst kind o' castaways, ain't they?"

"They sail under very auspicious colors sometimes, Captain Shale."

"Sartin. So they do. So they do. But ye can see the rottenness o' their timbers, poor critters—I call them the very worst kind o' castaways."

"Do you consider it a wholesome moral standpoint to regard sin exclusively with pity?"

"Wal', fur as I can see, it goes along whopping

FLOOD-TIDE

itself like a snake with its head stove in. Yes, it goes along whopping itself ary step o' the way."

"You are very optimistic."

"A what?" said Captain Shale, genially, willing to bear the accusation, however severe its import, with equanimity.

"You are very hopeful."

"Sartin. It don't do nobody any good to lose their hope. 'Course, in cases o' injustice, like where a big dog is chawin' on to a little one, I ain't no hand ter stand by ca'm. Ye'll find me poundin' off the big dog with all the besom I got. But arter I'd pounded on him sore, I'd help heal up his wounds an' feed him, an' teach him ter let alone o' little dogs—yes, an' hold his head up. I wouldn't let nobody lose all their hope. 'Tain't good for them nor the community ter let anybody lose all their hope."

Margaret had ceased to listen to what she regarded as incoherent ramblings. She advanced quickly and seized Mrs. Temple's hand with warmth, treating Aunt Sylphy with rather perfunctory courtesy.

"Can I see you alone for a little while, Mrs. Temple?" she said, almost at once.

Mrs. Temple left the old couple in a kindly, affectionate way, with a lingering manner that delighted them. She and Margaret went down to a favorite seat by the water. There was not much said at first. The younger woman seemed full of a wordless seeking, which the older woman recognized with a wordless response.

XIV

DARING THE HAUGHTY



F life were reasonable," said Margaret then, at length, from a full heart, "there would be some mental stimulus in living. But it is not so. Some play of fate or chance steps in for a death-grapple with our serious purpose. When we fancy we have found some constraining ideal, no sooner do we reach out our hands towards it for mutual climbing upward than the infirm thing reels and totters like an unguided ship at sea."

Scorn and despair were on the woman's mouth, deforming its tender lines. Above all, a proud self-control. Eye and brow were as resolute as they were discontent.

The "bookwriter" smiled. Child, saint, sinner, martyr, the fallen weak, the aspiring strong might all have found their counterpart in her mobile face.

"I have long ago given up seeking for my embodied ideal, Margaret," she said. "More than that, I have even ceased from the consciousness that I am one myself—that I supply that place to some small admiring universe."

"Pray, what ascending motive is there in life then?"

"Well, Captain Shale's: not to let any one lose all his hope. Not to cast any away—remembering that we ourselves are castaways."

“Oh, but that is mere sentiment!”

“On the contrary, it is hard logic; it is immutable substance. The rocks are immaterial compared with it.”

“It makes a melodrama of life—the greedy and the lazy devouring the credulous.”

Mrs. Temple shook her head. “Look at the spring over there, where they all go. It is not the less for its much giving, nor harmed however soiled the lips that drink from its fountain. Margaret—Dr. Langthorne—look here, dear, I want to tell you—I never in my life went to seek any good thing, flawless and satisfying, for myself, that I found it; but there are a few faint efforts of mine in which I have always infinite success, when the pilgrimage is to give somewhat, expecting nothing.”

“Is life a child’s babble, then—not to be comprehended, sentimental, purposeless?” Margaret spoke wearily.

Mrs. Temple paled, her face drawn for a moment.

“There are not so many and mysterious roads, Margaret. I have been over yours.”

“And the one you are on now is a pleasant way?” The doctor smiled with some condescension.

“There are humble flowers upon it; there are springs of water. Yes.”

“And the wayfaring man though a *fool*?” Margaret laughed brightly and inquiringly, still with her own complacent condescension.

“Surely—yes. But the flowers are sweet. They have a fragrance. And there are steady steps, to a steady goal—the faithfulest I have ever witnessed on any road.”

Mrs. Temple was flushed; she spoke earnestly through tears.

DARING THE HAUGHTY

"I have hurt you!" said Margaret, taking her hand.

"No. The question is, cannot I help you? Will you not come back to the house with me?"

"No, no. Go to your supper and your adorable, uncouth natives. I will wait here for the boat to take me over. I engaged one for this hour."

I had made my last haul for the day, beached my boat, and was following the path homeward, when I heard Margaret's voice, well to windward of me—"Alfred!"

I lifted my cap and greeted her. "Why do you sit there on the edge of us, so to speak? I wish my wife were at home and my cottage open. We would persuade you in."

With the like cheerful remark or two, I was passing on, when, "Are you so very hungry, like all the rest?" she observed, with smooth sarcasm.

"Hungry? Yes. Do I not look like a man with an appetite?"

"You do, indeed. You have grown admirably gross since you became a saint."

It was the first time I had met her face to face alone. Instead of piquing me either with pleasure or pain, this fact struck me with a sort of compunction to realize how utterly the fascination she had once held for me was gone. Her brown, queenly face had grown metallic for me. Compared with the face I loved, it was like some piece of music accurately played with conscious skill beside the melody of the master who pours out his soul.

She watched me with a curious smile. "I wish I had the world's easy way of forgetting," she said. "It is the part of wisdom, too. Yes, it is the better way." Her lips resolved themselves into a proud firmness; her sad eyes wandered seaward.

"No," I said, with the instant, dreamy Bar acceptance of appearances; "if you have some ideal of constancy beyond the rest of us, Margaret, I would hold to it."

"Now you taunt me!" she exclaimed.

At the fire in her face, suddenly turned towards me, some recollections did indeed sweep over me.

"I did not mean to," I said, twisting my cap.

She laughed. "You are getting sublime! You are very hungry. Go home to your supper."

"If I will send Dorna or Dinsmore to meet you, will you not come and sup with us?"

"Thank you, no. I am waiting my boat. Are you not very grateful to me, Alfred, for having cured you once of a strange infatuation?"

Once I would have leaped to those dark eyes. Their intense gravity did not draw me now. I had proved them beyond even the bane of the Bar simplicity.

"Yes," I said, simply.

"Commend me to George Washington and the saints! Well, I do not blame you. You have a sweet wife. I am in love with her myself."

"Margaret, may not what was infatuation be replaced by loyalty? If ever Infra and I can serve you, whatever we have—"

"Pshaw! you got that out of a story-book. You are famishing and your mackerel will be cold. Good-bye."

"No one," she mused alone, "cares for what is greatest and best in me. I have a good figure, a drawing face—I suppose, some wit; these are usually acceptable—but the heights I must climb alone. Ah, here comes the boat that was to meet me, and for once in the history of the Bar a boat on time!"

DARING THE HAUGHTY

She rose and walked down towards it. Arch sprang out, held the dory firm with one hand, and stretched out the other to her assistance.

"This is remarkable!" she observed. "I engaged Ned Boleman to take me over."

"I got him to let the job to me."

"What did you pay him?"

"A quarter," said Arch, frankly.

"I am flattered."

"I'd given more if he'd asked more."

"You overcome me. I have doubts whether I ought to permit you, but I know you to be a good sailor; it is getting late, and I want to get home. You are very prompt on time. You shall have your pay in advance." She handed him a piece of silver.

"I sha'n't take any pay!" said he, buoyantly, caressing her with the light, the joy, and the glory of his countenance.

"Then I sha'n't step aboard the boat."

He took the money and she stepped in. "I'll put it 'longside o' your pocket-handkerchief," he said, tenderly appropriating it. "Hi! the wind's breezing!"

"All is well then," said Margaret, with her graceful sarcasm. "I have observed that neither fate afflicts nor sorrow subdues you here if only the 'wind breezes,' as you call it."

"Everything depends on it, you know."

"You could row, could you not?"

"No man steadier or more endurin', if I do say it. But, Lord! what's rowing?" he cried, as with the wind and sail wedded they flew over the water.

Margaret regarded her companion, amused. Here before her was a physical ideal at least. Any projection of the ideal was welcome to her disappointed imagination. "You harm the effect," she mur-

FLOOD-TIDE

mured, as if studying some blemish on a painted landscape. "Why do you not wear your ordinary clothes, which are appropriate and becoming, instead of that decrepit broadcloth?"

Arch had made himself fine, wearing his derby hat and one of Tilly's cultivated roses in his button-hole. His face fell at the adored one's disappointment and his own unattractiveness, and turned childishly white except for the still fresh wound on his cheek.

Margaret had a professional theory that hurting people did not injure them; that it was, in fact, a medical tonic. The maternal instinct inhabited her in strange form. She would have borne children bravely and proudly, but her preconceived methods for their development and training would have caused them to shrink on the brink of mundane existence.

She liked to try her hand at forming the unformed. "I have hurt you," she said, kindly. "Remember, we criticise to their faces only those whom we—in whom we take an interest. But throw away that enormity in your button-hole, and wear this." She tossed him a wild flower from the bunch she held in her hand.

"I'd rather have this garden rose," he said. "It's—it's like you, sort of big and showy." The uncouth applied these adjectives with genuine admiration.

Margaret stared steadily at him, then burst into laughter.

"Deliver me from the babe-like critic! Intelligence merely cuts; the other kind flays at a blow. Well!" She began to arrange her own flowers. Innocently amused, and conscious—though her own

DARING THE HAUGHTY

were downcast—of the handsome eyes bent upon her with tragic adoration and helpless pleading, a smile, disarmed, girlish, played on her lips.

"You—you," said Arch, "thrust that lancet into my thumb, and I never cringed."

"Well?" She did not look up.

"Well, I'm mad, I guess, but I wish you'd kill me! I'd like it! I'd love it! You won't never look at me, and I shall love you more every hour of living."

The smile died, the eyes met his with their calm gravity.

"Life is very sad, poor Arch, for us all."

"I'll cruise. I'll get rich—I know of something—if you'll only promise."

"I should not like you rich, and I cannot promise. Why will you be ridiculous?"

"By God! am I that?" he cried, rising to his full stature, which was heroic. "Take that back, or I'll careen the boat and take you down with me!"

She held out her hand to him. He subsided. She still held his hand. He was weak as a kitten. "I love your sharp talk to me. I love you when you hit; but don't say I'm a laughing-stock to you. Don't say that!"

"You are not laughable to me. It is too bad—too bad"—her hand was on his powerful one and he could not move. He could not stir from her eyes; there was neither passion nor anger in them; they seemed only to study him; he would have died to make them tender.

"It is too bad—too bad," she repeated, "but the world is all like that. We must be brave—you and I."

"I don't see. You've got the education, but I'm strong as any man that's made. I've never been

FLOOD-TIDE

mean to a soul. And there's one thing about it, when we marry a woman we love and abide by her, as much old and dying as now here this very moment. There's something in that."

"Oh, there is everything in that to comfort a woman's heart, Arch." But still only that professional touch of the hand and the grave, intent study of the eyes.

"It seems to me such as have had the advantages—it seems to me the world would get straighter if such as had the advantages gave 'em to help—"

"But I do not love you, Arch. I have not the least desire under any circumstances to marry you. Ah, how selfish you are!" she sighed. Sadness and a new despair came over her. She withdrew her hand and turned from him.

So they proceeded in silence. Arch sailed the boat trimly towards the shore. "I have conquered the poor lion," thought the woman. "Good-bye," she said to him quite in a conventional way as he helped her ashore. "Do not fasten your boat. The house is but a step—I prefer to go alone"—he was dragging his dory on to the beach—"sail home, please—and good-night! We shall be good friends. You may come to see me, and I shall be happy to have you meet any of my friends."

It was known that the aristocratic dwellers in the summer cottages, far and near, came to call upon the lady.

Her tone, her manner, were as heartily condescending as though she patted some huge dog in her path.

The boat lay quiet on the sands. Through a path clearing the evergreens a glimpse was had of the house where Dr. Langthorne was staying.

DARING THE HAUGHTY

"I'll watch here till I see you safe into the house," said Arch. Then suddenly he turned to her; his pale face was like one inspired.

"Margaret!"—she could not believe her ears—"Margaret!"—his arm was about her, and her two hands imprisoned and locked in one of his—"your hair is not parted quite even right over the forehead here. I'll make it straight—so—and then I'll go away. Don't be frightened."

She stood like a statue before the wretch, still, because professionally wise, her eyes downcast.

He parted and smoothed the long black locks. "There! but it won't stay smooth when it's parted straight. You were born so!" He laughed at her tenderly; he stooped and kissed her lips.

"Now go home!" he said, sternly. "Go!" He was trembling in every limb. "But before you go, mind this—I respect you along o' God. I'll kill any other man that touches you, and I'll kiss no other woman this world through! I'm a saint, too, Margaret—God knows I'm a saint! Go home, I tell you, love. Go home!"

Margaret followed the path homeward with a cast of features new to her; they were desperately pale and they had the look of one who does not inhabit the actual—she was no dreamer—she lived in the actual.

She mounted the stairs before joining the merry circle she heard at the table. She bathed her face into color and smoothed her hair with precision. From her window she could see a boat flying before the wind, Barward.

It was a common fishing-boat with a grimy sail—that she knew. But neither sea nor earth nor air were to be depended upon. The transient sun had

FLOOD-TIDE

set, and there was a new world breathing tranquilly in a new light and strange. The dim firs were tipped with gold; there were shining paths along the sea; the flying sail was swan-white, white as an angel's wing.

XV

STEERED BY THE WICKED MAN



F Tunkhaven is tryin' to lift itself out of the earthly moulderin' and bygoneness it's fell into from what was once a seaport town, by having a Fourth o' July celebration, I, for one, am goin' to sail my tabernacle over there," said Dorna, "and lend my countenance on to 'em for all I'm worth."

This magnanimous purpose obtained generally on the Bar and in its vicinity, Dorna being the centrifugal sun and dynamo thereof.

"Two Fourth o' Julys has passed over our heads," continued she, "and we taken no more notice 'n if we was pirates. I must say I don't want to drop out of Christianity entirely."

The big boats all sailed. Dr. Langthorne never mingled with a common rabble of this sort. But Dr. Saxe had his yacht trimmed with the true courage of the occasion. Its flags waved from an anchorage in the bay, and he was pulling shoreward in the small boat. The Bar was not without some pride that its native child, Alpena, should be carrying off the treasures of science and wealth represented by this large and sunny person. The supposed chagrin of Margaret herself, as well as that of Harlan and Arch, melted

FLOOD-TIDE

from before the shining features of the romance.

Alpena, waiting on the beach in her red jacket, was conscious of a hand on her shoulder.

"Will you let me go in your company to-day?" said the "bookwriter."

Alpena blushed, a little disconcerted, an answering smile, however, soon parting her red lips and showing the pretty, uneven teeth.

"Would you rather go with us than with any of the rest?"

"No—oh no! Still, I have decided to go with you."

The blush on the girl's face changed to a flame.

"I am a good girl, Mrs. Temple."

"Just tolerably so—nothing to boast of."

"Come on, then, mother!" Alpena seized the stout matron by the waist and proceeded to force her to a waltz on the sands, at the same time kissing her hat awry. Norman Saxe, landing, regarded the sprite, hypnotized—his face beaming—and acknowledged the accession of Mrs. Temple to the company with unaffected cordiality. His admiration of Alpena was genuine, and he had no desire to compromise her.

The trio were boarding their boat when an episode savoring still more eagerly of romance and the villain of the play gave new edification to the Bar. The high stepping of a pair of horses, the ostentatious jubilation of metalled harness, were heard in the lane, and there sat Tyrolese Dunbar, framed in an elegance never before witnessed on that humble highway; a spacious landau, a liveried driver perched high, the gentleman himself reclining among cushions.

STEERED BY THE WICKED MAN

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen!" we exclaimed on all sides.

Tyrolese had a glimpse of the red jacket and the yacht, and his face was not pleasant to see.

"I had an appointment with your Beauty and Pride," he sneered evenly, above his angry discomfiture, "to drive her to the 'celebration' to-day. She has decided to go by water, I see. You are people of your word along here surely!"

"Was it she or her father made the appointment with ye?" said our "wicked man"—Bayruck—quite coolly, and he looked the courtier and his equipage over with smiling unconcern. "Ain't you gittin' rather pucker-struck, Tyrolese?" he commented, beamingly.

"Appointments made by the father may have to be met in the end, all the same," said the young man, stepping from his carriage. "Since sailing is all the fashion, I'll sail over, too. Drive back home, Steve." He fumbled with some loose notes in his pocket. I knew by intuition that he would request to sail in my boat. "Shall I take him in?" I murmured to Captain Shale, who was witnessing these preparations, though he had no mind for the excursion and stood absolved from the enterprise.

"I don' know but what I would," he answered, in a tone that conveyed full assent. "'Tain't our business to cast away. I don' know what makes Alpeny so tormentin' dear to folks"—but he smiled genially. "The women folks was kind o' pityin' of her for havin' lanked up to nigh about six foot and motherless, and they all went to nurturin' of her. And it seems as though everybody she run afoul of, man or woman, took a kind o' softness in contract from God A'mighty to go to nurturin' that gal!"

FLOOD-TIDE

"May I join your crew, Captain Alfred?" said Tyrolese, approaching. He handed me a five-dollar note—an equivocal, hard face half averted from me. His look said, "You were once a gentleman. I am sorry for you. Have the good sense to take what you can get."

"Pardon me," I said, with a flourish of manner which the Bar regarded as sportive, and grinned accordingly; "if you will condescend to occupy a place in my boat I shall be only too highly honored. It would be impossible for me to accept any compensation."

"Say! Mister Dunbar, 't needn't to go a-beggin'—*I'll* take it!" Johnny Bowles rushed up breathlessly. He was a peripatetic orphan, living from house to house; he was in rags, as he deserved to be for his iniquities. Nevertheless, I looked to see a silver piece at least extended by him to whom those straining, eager eyes addressed themselves.

Tyrolese looked him over with cold amusement.

"Oh, you get out!" he said.

"See here, Johnny!" said Captain Shale—"see here, you poor little durnation Everywheres, you!" His great worn knuckles emerged from his pocket bearing pipe, tobacco, strings, and in the *mêlée* some pieces of silver. "Here, Johnny, you treat yourself along o' the rest when you get over to the celebration. It don't do nobody any good," said the old man addressing the company in a broad and tender spirit, which cast no reflection on any soul—"it don't do nobody any good to be jest wholly disapp'inted and cast away—it don't."

I had a motley company for my crew. It happened so—those whose society had not been distinctly coveted elsewhere. I thought *Infra* would have approved.

STEERED BY THE WICKED MAN

Even Dorna had left me and sailed in another company with the witty and the brave, consigning Dinsmore to take command of my boat, however.

I had Tyrolese Dunbar, restless, covertly angry, clad in the latest fashion. I had the two most conservative ancient aunts of the Bar, who sat together gravely knitting with their mitts on. I had Earle—the “fool”—bustling about officiously with three dingy spools of thread and some pins that would not pierce, in the sale of which he meant to crown himself as a financier at the port of Tunkhaven.

I had Grandpa Gleeson, discoursing ever keenly and warily on the Apocalypse.

I had the “wreck.”

I had Dinsmore and Johnny Bowles.

As we were weighing anchor, Bayruck, the “wicked,” came sweeping towards us in a dory with his powerful stroke. He dismissed his companion and stepped into our craft. His own vessel lay anchored in the distance, laden to the water’s edge with barrelled herring.

“I was goin’ in another crew, Alfred,” said he; “but, by God, I got a heart in me! and when I see the gang you got messed-up in over here, I says to myself, they’ve thrun all the nubbins over on to Alf. I’ll go over an’ help him salt down that mess o’ eels, says I.”

He took Dinsmore by the collar from some precarious and dominant position he was occupying at the prow and settled him with decision.

“You keep quiet, little capting,” said he.

Johnny Bowles was leaning over the gunwale in playful commerce with the soundless deep; him he seized by the trousers and disposed of similarly.

“You lay steady, little mate.” There was one

FLOOD-TIDE

being of whom Dinsmore and Johnny stood as yet in respectful awe. It was the "wicked man."

In due time he conversed with the two aunts.

"I do not consider myself either a nubbin or an eel," said the foremost of them, knitting severely.

"Pshaw! ye know I meant the men folks. You know well enough, same as we all do, that ye're the two han'somest an' most 'ristocratic women to the Bar, an' the devil himself couldn't sink no boat 't you was aboard of."

They fluttered, and Bayruck continued: "I declare it boldly, an' I don't care who hears me, ef I ever jine on to any religion it's goin' to be an advent!"

They were adverts. They sighed with some relenting, and said they "feared he might be too late."

"Too late it may be," he affirmed, cheerfully, "but it's advent or nothin'!" Their indurate countenances softened with modified approval.

He traded with the "fool" a pipe and a plug of tobacco for some scathless pins, and saw him settled in peace smoking.

He listened to Grandpa Gleeson in the matter of horns, tails, candlesticks, and other awkward mysteries, and finally assured him with shining good nature:

"Wal', Cap'n Gleeson, for a temperance man, you've got hold o' the durndest lot o' delirious trimmings I ever laid ears to."

Tyrolese he ignored.

He comforted the "wreck" with a countenance of sad and silent sympathy, unaffected.

The wind was free and he a master. He steered, discreetly gauging the tide, through byways and short cuts of the ocean seldom dared. Mine was not a swift boat—but thus did the "wicked man," nor did he dally; and he brought us, first of all the Bar company,

STEERED BY THE WICKED MAN

into the port of Tunkhaven. We tied to the crumbling wharf, climbed some precipitous steps, Bayruck gallantly hoisting the aunts upward by main force.

We were preparing to follow him whithersoever he might lead, when he kindly though abruptly disowned us for the remainder of the day.

"I've considerable business to attend to around in this port," he said. "Go and amuse yourselves with the Fo'rt' o' July junkets. I'll scrape ye all together an' steer ye home again, come evenin'. Good-bye," he added with fatherly indulgence in the smile he threw back at us; "go and enjy yourselves best ye can, every durned fool one o' ye."

Tyrolese Dunbar marched smartly away to his own designs. Dinsmore and Johnny Bowles were as a sped shaft in the swiftness of their evanishing. The aunts had relatives at the port, for whose dwelling they took a direct course gravely. Grandpa Gleeson, after brief comments on the weather exchanged with some ancient loiterers at the wharf, at once began quizzing them with the sharp intent of hidden and symbolic figures. The "fool," jaunty in his checked raiment, was already surrounded by a group of attentive and curious spectators; these would be faithful, I knew, and also that their number would be constantly augmented by other followers.

I stood alone with the "wreck."

"Ye heard how I got my timbers fixed over to the ledges?" he went on, with his heart-broken laugh. "I hope you hain't never done sech a smart thing as I done! I was never turned ashore from no vessel afore in my life—"

"Come," I said, "the tight-rope walking is the first thing to take place, I believe. Let's go and find the tight rope."

XVI

HARISSMENTS



HE "wreck" and I were somehow in deep sympathy with the home-made acrobatics of Tunkhaven. The throng speculated, criticised, jeered. We gazed silently, knowing that all failure hath its pangs.

A rope was stretched from the little steeple to the summit of a pine-tree on the other side of the highway, and the audience, as yet open-mouthed and respectful, waited as those who should see sights. The performer appeared, a reckless, sturdy young native, clad in an undervest, an enveloping sash, and some trunks undeniably suggestive as an extract from the wardrobe of Hamburg edging and femininity.

He thrust his thumbs into his sash and gazed upward with omnivorous contempt.

"Lower that hawser!" he shouted. "I didn't advertise to walk over no meet'n'-house steeples nor no pine-trees. I ain't no resident of Venus, Satun, nor Mars. I ain't gone to heaven yit, by Switchy!" and he sneered.

"If ye're goin' to walk a tight rope, Gustavus," expostulated an old mariner, deliberately, "'t don't make no difference whether it's a fathom or two further up. If you can r'a'ly steer your masthead over that there damned narrer neck o' land swingin'

HARRISMENTS

up there, you're jest as safet as though she was layin' two foot from the ground."

"You git up there and take a stroll yourself, if you like it so well," replied Gustavus.

"I never advertised 't I had the foot-gum of a fly, nor that I could flutter and tweedle 'round same as sparrers do. But you have."

"I advertised to walk a taut rope for three dollars, but I ain't so old a hand to it as some, and I ain't goin' foolin' around with the moon, now, you bet—not for the sake o' ticklin' any old raft o' tar jackets that have come here on the gape."

"I'd rather have on a tar jacket," replied the old mariner, "than a pink ribbin round my loins and my wife's cotton drawers. I feel safer."

Cheers and jibes ensued. The acrobat smiled undaunted and looked around. "You're all waitin' to see that taut rope walked, ain't ye?" said he.

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen!" we admitted guardedly.

"Wal', you keep lookin'. Keep lookin' straight at it! I ain't seen any three dollars in this crowd yet"—and he walked away calmly. Below medium height, there was something herculean in the texture of his bare arms and calves, and no one followed him with any physical protest.

"I'll give five dollars to any one who will go across that rope," said young Dunbar, an insinuating leer on his face.

We were still waiting at this imminent stage of the proceedings with mutual lowered glances, when we were conscious of a creaking and swaying of the rope overhead, and beheld Johnny Bowles suspended, going hand over hand from church to tree, Dinsmore hanging astride the steeple regarding him.

FLOOD-TIDE

We were glad Dorna had arrived. She now stepped forth. "You fetch your tabernacle down off'n that advent steeple, Dinsmore Gleeson!"

"I ain't a-hurtin' of it, ma."

"It's a - devourin' your trousers. I started you out this mornin' with your nakedness clean hid and forgot, and here you be an aspect already! I never see sech harissments! Hang on, Johnny!"

Johnny hung on, clambered down the tree, and approached Tyrolese Dunbar.

"Call that walking a rope?" said Tyrolese, and justly.

"You didn't say 'walk,'" triumphed Johnny; "ye said get acrosst."

"Right! Right! It's a clean bill. Fixed! Sure!" echoed the group.

"Pooh! my meaning was evident. Off with you, you little wood-cat!"

Dorna stepped up to Tyrolese and we knew we had only to wait, and that not long. "You hand that prize money over to little Everywheres!"

"Who are you?" But Tyrolese had thrust his hand into his pocket, and we knew he would never withdraw it empty.

"Never mind. I'm a saint 't sees fair play. Here I stand and here I wait!"

Not long, as we had divined. The note emerged. Johnny Bowles accepted it with protruding eyes of joy and unbelief and with a gasping "Thank ye," and reinforced by the tattered Dinsmore, who heeded not the calls of his mother at this pass, they two melted again like shooting-stars out of our horizon.

"What they all startin' for now? That rope-walkin' wa'n't nothin'. I could see as much sights

HARISSMENTS

as that settin' under the spruce-tree to home," said the weary "wreck."

"Come. There's a balloon ascension." The "wreck" and I were ever in the rear. Even the "fool" in his showy raiment stalked jubilantly far ahead of us. The "wicked man" passed us and we drank his dust. He did not recognize us. He drove with a companion in a top phaeton, an affair of reckless elegance for Tunkhaven, antiquated though it was. The top, aided by broken springs, fell back to the utmost limit, and the leathern flap trailed on the ground behind. Bayruck, who had something distinguished in his original bearing, looked jocose, disjointed, and a willing prey to fate. It was evident that his particular "business" for the day had already begun.

We came to the scene at last in an open field; here I caught a glimpse of three persons seated together on a knoll, respectability, mirth, comfort breathing from them like a song. Alpena, rising to view the field, swaying a little, laid her hand on Norman Saxe's shoulder for recovery, blushed, recalled the act by pressing the "bookwriter's" arm instead. Her form, so girlish in its low position on the grass, was conspicuous and majestic as she stood; in this attitude she suggested always an environment of spacious halls and the sweep of trailing draperies.

"It is Tyrolese Dunbar," she said, seating herself again, fluttering, childlike except for the wonderful intensity in her eyes.

"Did you promise to come here with him?" queried Mrs. Temple.

"No, but I expect daddy promised him. I'm not afraid." At this she turned, and slowly and with self-possession raised her eyes to Norman Saxe. There was a quiet trust in them as of a formed habit,

FLOOD-TIDE

womanly, sustained. His own look answered her with a great avowal and the light of an overweening joy.

"So," I thought. "So. Ah, Margaret! Ah, life!"

"Where is the balloon?" the disconsolate "wreck" reminded me.

"Undoubtedly it is somewhere among that shouting group in the centre of the field," I answered.

After a long suspense of waiting, mystery surrounding the wrangling athletes in the pit, a dingy brown, nondescript object, considerably larger than a bushel-basket, wavered slowly up into the air and hung there tamely obedient to the reins of the aeronaut. A space was cleared, and something like method and bombast was now introduced to the halting ceremonies of the day.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried a self-confident voice, "for a purse—of three dollars—Tom Gunsol—has contracted—to sail up—not less 'n twenty-five—nor more 'n fifty—feet—suspended on to—this here balloon—and then—by pullin' a valve—and lettin' the inflation out of her—descend again to mother earth. I know 't you all want Tom to go through with this wonderful performance safe. Here's hop-in'. One—two—three—Tom—go!"

This Tom heartily struggled to do, but some perversity of the wind or in the machine itself made all his efforts futile. He ran, he jumped, coaxing the thing to lift him even but a few small inches, but it refused.

"No use! Yer ballas' 's too heavy. How 'd ye expect a hull o' that size ter make off with a two hunderd-pound ballas', Tom? Ho! ho!"

"She's lifted me afore!" cried Tom.

"Wal, she's tuckered. She won't never do it

HARRISMENTS

again. She may do for your soul to go up in, Tom, but she'll never carry yer body."

"Go an' ketch a mosquitter, Tom, an' tie a hawser to her hind-legs an' see if ye can't git a little h'ist!"

Feeling a breeze of wind, Tom desperately let the rope out to its utmost limit and gave an enticing leap. In so doing he had inadvertently pulled the valve. The direful object overhead, instead of aspiring away with him, threw him suddenly on his haunches, and, descending with a loud, exasperating groan, sank flat upon his head. There he sat for a moment, not so much physically exhausted as stunned with mental humiliation.

A ready group came forward to shake hands with him.

"Glad to see ye safe back on the 'arth ag'in, Tom. I use' to know yer father, an' when I see you settin' off for another sp'ere I felt kind o' like steppin' out to say good-bye, only I didn't want ter interrupt the perceedin's. Hope ye left 'em all well up there?"

"How d' do, Tom? How d' do? Glad to see you home. S'pose ye've come back to reside among us in the same old way?"

"I always heered ye was a man 't kept yer contracts, Tom. Ye contracted not to go up more 'n fifty feet, an' ye didn't! Can't see as ye've changed much since ye left us. Hair grayed off some maybe, but that 'll color up all right now ye've got back to the old Tunkhaven climate."

Great laughter went up in that direction whither the balloon had refused to explore. One girl, from up country, was carried over into the drug-store suffering from a seizure of the joyfulest hysterics.

Tom wofully rose and kicked the balloon to shreds.

FLOOD-TIDE

Dorna spoke, on the outskirts of the crowd, and her clear voice was heard. "We come over to what we was told was goin' to be entertainments," said she. "Do you call these entertainments? *I* call them the fiddlinest kind o' harissments!"

She was cheered, as she deserved, and I smiled; but the "wreck" lifted his hungry eyes to me.

"She was a good boat, but she was strained terrible. The' couldn't nothin' live on them ledges—"

"Come," I said, hopefully, "we must go over and see the horse race."

"Is the' a hoss race?"

"Yes."

He groaned like one in utter despair, but consented meekly, and thither we pursued our almost unattended way. The faith of the Tunkhaven revellers had expired with that last raucous shriek of the balloon. The "wreck" and I plodded on as some village pair on a rainy Sunday will set forth to the meeting-house, resolved that the minister shall not shiver alone therein.

Here, however, we found the "fool" elate amid his satellites, jingling the coin in his pockets, his merchandise all disposed of save for one spool of thread which his admirers had attached to his coat-tails and which trailed behind him with heartless rollicking. In another perspective I saw the three happy beings from the yacht waiting the next scene with evidently wholly indulgent anticipations.

Presently there came toiling along the simple and rugged path of the beaten highway a man with a fierce expression, and swart and knotty as a pine-tree; in the other rut walked the master of ceremonies, and between them they led a horse so amiable and domesticated in his appearance that their solemn

HARRISMENTS

guidance of him with ropes oppressed us with an awful sense of the mysterious.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried the accustomed voice, "for a purse—of three dollars—Ed Codman—and Ed Sype—contracted on this here race. Ed Sype has got mad about something—and backed out. But in order not to disappoint this audience—Ed Codman is a-goin' to run this race alone!" (Cheers from the satellites of the bespooled merchant.) "He contracts—me timing him" (here the speaker took out his watch)—"to go clean through Snare Crick—around Loon Point—to the right hand of the Nubble—over Blueberry Clump—and turning Shabby Corners—striking into Z Clot—and Windy Holler—around to the left hand o' the Nubble ag'in—and Snare Crick—home. Here's hopin'. One—two—three—Ed—go!"

The fierce being who had mounted the horse gathered up the reins, and we were suddenly and unjustly taken off our feet to hear him shout in a voice of thunder, "Give me the road here! Give me the road!" for it was already his, as well as pretty much all the adjacent territory as far as eye could see.

"Give me the road, I say!" he yelled.

"All right, Ed," said a sarcastic-soothing voice from the audience; "the' ain't time to have the title-deeds drawed up now, but the road's yourn all right. Go ahead!"

With a dreadful look at the speaker, Ed pulled the grazing animal's head out of the grass, and, slapping him into a canter barren of all enthusiasm, the two disappeared with a decorum that was almost melancholic around the bend of the road.

"Keep out of the way!" said the alert master of

FLOOD-TIDE

ceremonies, "he'll get waked up and he'll come in here like hell-fire!"

But in no manner whatever did he return—neither as demoniac flame nor as cold, crawling molasses. It was after long waiting that the umpire finally returned his watch to his pocket and turned away. "He's mad about something, too," he murmured. Indeed, we were all convinced that Ed Codman's feelings had been wounded in some way, especially as Johnny Bowles appeared about this time, round-eyed and corpulent from an excessive consumption of bananas, and informed us that "Ed Codman was settin' down on the wharf swappin' hosses with Bill Askam."

"Is the' anything more?" said the "wreck."

"The boat race. It is the last, I think."

So we set out for the wharf, and gladly. God's great wind blew there undiminished. Many a sail danced on the water. We felt no cause even against Ed Codman stretched languidly on the wharf, his unchained racer feasting on the distant greensward. We felt no cause against events when told that the seamen who had contracted to race for a purse of three dollars had differed as to light or heavy canvas, and thereupon, dismissing the theme altogether, had sailed in calmness and mutual amity over to Fire Island for bait.

Still there was a race. Dr. Saxe good-naturedly offered to fly his yacht against Harlan's boat. The women stayed ashore. Alpena, in her wild way, wandering apart from Mrs. Temple, was accosted with great courtesy by Tyrolese Dunbar.

"You have spoiled my day, Miss Marlow," he said, "but all's well that ends well. I am ready to forgive now, that I may have a word with you alone."

"What is it?" said she, her eyes that could be so desolate and mad dreaming outward towards the water.

HARRISMENTS

"It is this. I make you, with your father's consent, an offer of marriage, Miss Marlow. And—and," he declared as he looked at her, "I lay everything at your feet. I will—I will—I'll give my life to make you happy. Think, Alpy! It shall be all your own way—a winter home—a summer home—travel. Think—I want you of all women, you beautiful—"

"I don't want it," said Alpy, almost irritably, not even looking at him.

"What is there about me," he pleaded in a tone foreign to his nature: "why can't you like me?"

"I will like you, Tyrolese," said this feminine autocrat, "if you won't bother me;" and she turned to him with a grave, womanly smile. "Go and pick out whom you choose, if it is so easy, with your money."

"I've picked out you, and I'll fight for you too, madam! It is your father's word as well."

She shrugged her shoulders. "*Gentlemen* don't follow girls who do not want them."

"You are a mighty fine piece of ice," he spoke hotly; "but there's fire in your eyes, Alpy, and there's shine in your hair"—he leaned towards her, trying to make his hard face all kindness, pleading.

She sprang away from him, and, yielding queen-like to a simple instinct of dislike and with her own beautiful, swift pace that seemed unhurried by reason of its grace, rejoined her companion.

Tyrolese ground his teeth and actually cursed her. He looked about with narrowed eyes to see if any one had observed her unceremonious desertion of him.

"Damn! One would think the little wild strawberry picker had been raised by the old nobility," he sneered mentally. "There are handsome girls enough—town girls—chasing me, Alpy Marlow.

FLOOD-TIDE

I picked you up for a fancy." Still her retreating figure appealed to him significantly. "That dolt of a professional man may throw you over as he has the other lady. The old man's on my side. Ten to one I'll break you to the bridle yet, Alpy. Alpy," he glowed to himself admiringly, "you'll make the grandest lady—"

Earle, the mentally afflicted, had discovered at last the following spool at his heels, and was rather pleased with this reinforcement of supplies. He approached Tyrolese with the captured object, inexpressibly soiled by this time.

"Las' o' the stock!" he sputtered, with importance; "have it for two cent, Mist' Dunbar. Have it for a cent!" he volunteered to the other's cold, withdrawing countenance.

Somehow I could not forgive Dunbar for not making the purchase, the "fool" was so joyfully confident of the value of his wares, so consciously fine in his staring checked raiment: it hurt me the way his jaw was made to droop and his eyes fill with dismay and disappointment as Tyrolese curtly turned his back upon him and walked away.

"Look a' here, Earle," called the "wreck."

The "fool" sprang forward.

"Ye heard how I got turned ashore?" came the broken laugh.

The "fool" nodded with intelligent sympathy.

"I'm a-needin' a spool o' thread, Earle. Ye got one?"

Forth it came hopefully.

"Jes' the kind I want! Jes' the kind!" The "wreck's" scarred, trembling fingers fumbled in his pocket for the simple price—no more. The "fool" marched away, joy and faith restored.

XVII

AFTER THE RED LIGHT



WAS told that Harlan and Arch heeled their boat over on the beach and electrified her keel with Star of the Night stove-blackening; that they then broke six dozens of eggs over that burnished surface before starting on the course.

Anyway, they won the race—these natives of the Bar—to our admiration and not much, it seemed, to the chagrin of Dr. Saxe, who was cordial and gay about it all.

The “wreck” became even animated when the fishing-boat leaned, caught the wind of victory, and bounded ahead of the ornate yacht.

“Hi!” he cried. “Look at her! She’s an almighty smart boat, and there’s a couple o’ almighty smart boys drivin’ her. Look at her—damn her, she’ll suck a-holt o’ wind when no other boat can’t git no wind!”

“We are pleased to say,” shouted the reawakened official voice at the close of the contest, “that Dr. Saxe’s boat done well, but Harl and Arch has done a little better. This race was contracted for a purse o’ three dollars, but through the generosity of the Hon. Tyrolese Dunbar, over from the Reef, the prize has been increased to ten. Here’s

FLOOD-TIDE

hopin' ! Come forrards, Harl, and receive the stakes."

Tyrolese, in his natty light clothes, stood leaning carelessly against an abutment of the rotten wharf.

Harlan advanced slowly to the referee. "I'll take the three dollars Tunkhaven prize-money, if ye want me to," he said, "though I ain't much consarned about it."

His soft, sunny hair waving back from his solemn, darkly tanned face, his light-blue eyes and large, brawny hands—all made a singular picture of strength and innocence.

"Don't ye want the ten dollars, Harl?"

"I do not."

"What shall I do with it?"

"What ye like."

Tyrolese, burning with anger, gave a light laugh of affected unconcern.

"Wal', it's all over," said the mariner who had first criticised the rope-walking, rising with a full yawn. "I hain't suffered as I know on sunnin' around over here all day, but sartin I hain't seen no sights! To tell the proper truth, I might jest as well 'a' been home pursuin' my industries."

His countenance was benevolent and smiling, however, and we accepted the signal for home-sailing with a sense of peace. "Let's ketch a little wind afore the red light," he continued, meaning, "Let's put forth before the sun has quite set."

And now, like a faithful shepherd, I began to look about me. The "wreck" was ever with me, and Earle, conspicuous as usual, ready to embark.

Over by a retired pillar of the wharf—now that all

AFTER THE RED LIGHT

was still—I caught a glimpse of two ancient men, one resigned wholly, the other alert, with voice and gesture canny, hovering, waiting only for ignorance to declare itself before making another dart at the honey of its own occult wisdom.

“Be we in the sixth universal kingdom, hey?” inquired Grandpa Gleeson.

The victim, dazed, hopeless, made no sign.

“Can you tell me the meanin’ of the four great divers, the ten horns, and a little horn, hey?”

A weary sigh.

“What was the first beginnin’s of the suttility of the woman?” said grandpa, jumping a foot or two backward in triumph and standing on the impregnability of his argument with a steady and unanswerable, though not deep, eye.

“Are you ready? We’re going to sail, Captain Gleeson,” I cried, at which his listener came faintly back to life, made a desperate step Tunkhavenward, and walked giddily away.

Still farther removed from the scene, two little forms sat heavily on a pile of herring nets. Once so stirring with animation, they seemed indifferent to every call. Their eyes were fishy, dead.

“What ails you?” I asked of Dinsmore and Johnny Bowles.

Dinsmore was too broken-hearted to reply. Johnny lifted his truthful eyes with a pathetic appeal too deep for tears.

“I guess we et too many banannys,” he moaned.

“Are you too ill to walk,” I asked—“to get to the boat?”

At this some reminiscences of the brave sea seemed to inspire them feebly; they staggered to their feet and followed me.

FLOOD-TIDE

Where was Bayruck? True to the thought and to his instinct as a master of craft, the rattle of the phaeton was heard approaching; its trailing flap, loosened through the peregrinations of the day, hung now by one uncertain hook and swept the earth behind like a black, piratical banner doomed to a pilgrimage of dust.

One effort he made to appear dominant and king-like. Driven like a nabob to the very port of embarkation, his head was held erect, his black eyes glowing. "He has recovered. After all, we shall be steered gallantly home," I thought. But in the act of alighting he fell simply and willingly prone, and, thus stretched upon the wharf, authorized to himself at once a slumber impervious to outward call. Once, being heartily shaken, he opened his eyes, but they did not know us, and closed again in a manner signifying no return.

A group of loafers assisted in the interesting process of lowering his form to the boat, where he was stowed among the other inanimate objects in the stern. Dinsmore and Johnny, drunken with bananas, gazed drearily on the situation of this their hero vanquished by the vile juices of Tunkhaven. All their respect, all their awe of him, had fled. It was pitiful.

Dunbar had taken other means of returning. The aunts had disdainfully sought passage in more respectable company. As I was trimming my sails for the homeward adventure, the wharf loafers—visibly and with sad countenances regretting our departure—threw a bunch of lighted fire-crackers into my boat. Chasing these with a pail of salt water, to the loud merriment of the "fool," I conquered the explosives at last and got under way.

AFTER THE RED LIGHT

Earle then settled down with his pipe and the insolent air of a man of fortune.

Grandpa Gleeson undertook to enliven Dinsmore and Johnny with horny hyperbole and prophecy, but they turned from him loathingly to the supporting arms of the "wreck," who held them one on either side in a pathetic silence that alone seemed grateful to them. Whereupon grandpa himself, cut off from audience, subsided in a measure.

Belated, we were in the midst of the red light. This, as we swept on, grew golden and tender until it became not color at all, but the hymn that a mother sings to a sick child while his pain ceases and he gazes wide-eyed upon rest.

It fell upon my motley crew—drunken sinner, perking idiot, forlorn childhood, "wreck," and all. We felt no woe. I ceased to steer the little craft, and the Hand competent for wind and tide bore us well; bore even Grandpa Gleeson too, so wise—so wise as to past epoch and coming millennium. His old blue eyes looked outward, and his remote and antediluvian Jehovah compelled him to recognition by a nearer smile.

"'And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come,'" piped the old man; "'and let him that heareth say, Come, and whosoever will'—heh! heh!—d' ye hear, captain?—'whosoever will—'"

"I hear," I said.

XVIII

BY THE MOONLIGHT



LPENA was not without thought in her black-crowned head. She had tender, clinging moods. She had moods—and these were as likely as not to come at inopportune moments—of desiring to be quite alone. At such seasons she withdrew herself in her wild spirit without apology and shrugged her shoulders at interlopers.

“Is she vexed with me?” Dr. Saxe asked with a face of care.

“Let her moon away,” said Mrs. Temple. “She will come back presently, and her return will be with a laugh.”

“Heaven made her for grace,” he murmured, looking at the pensive Madonna face at the far end of the boat, dreaming, resting on the long, slight hand.

“She is imp and nun both,” said Mrs. Temple, regarding her with a tender smile.

“Mrs. Temple, I have a confession to make to one who stands in any sense as that girl’s guardian or friend. I love her. I desire her to be my wife.”

“Well?”

“In a grave mood, yet earnest—not remote in spirit as now—she confessed—her love for me. That

BY THE MOONLIGHT

means something, thank God! It means sincerity for *Alpy* to do that."

"Yes, it means much—for a girl like *Alpy* to do that."

"It troubles me when she draws away in this fashion. Mrs. Temple, will you help me in winning *Alpy* to an early marriage—in getting her away from that old, wind-blown, rattletrap of a house on the bluffs, and from her unworthy father? Has she never—does she never speak of me to you?" he urged to her hesitating silence.

"Certainly. She is content, she is happy in your company."

"What, then—what troubles her?"

"She tells me that she troubles sometimes about Margaret Langthorne."

"Nonsense! It is now a mutual acknowledgment between Margaret Langthorne and myself that our engagement was a mistake. Mrs. Temple, I would not do any woman the wrong to marry her when my soul is at the feet of another.

"Do you blame me?" he asked, presently, in his impetuous way, the big present world of joy and desire glowing on his handsome face. "I love *Alpy* Marlow. I have been looking for her all my life—all my life."

"Tell me—tell an old lady," said the "bookwriter," in a tone that in its inquiring accents had something of the sweet encouragement of a laugh, "did you never say that to any woman before?"

"I think I never said that—no—not that," he asserted, his good face aflame. "Mrs. Temple, all the rest have been as finger-points to lead me to the star that I love with my whole soul—that I adore!"

FLOOD-TIDE

"And did you never—did you never say that before?"

"Good God! don't you believe a man when he lays his heart bare before you? I tell you it is the suffering of despair when that girl turns away from me."

"Be patient, Dr. Saxe. I am old—so old."

"Nay, I deny that," he said, kindly; "but it is like a knife when you question this supreme, this all-absorbing love, that is my life, my hope."

"So old, I have learned what love is."

"Oh—religion?" he said, appreciatively. "Yes, I know, and I mean to follow that, Mrs. Temple—with Alpy."

"Have learned what love is. It is neither desire nor possession—it is only being true."

XIX

ZEKE'S ENLARGEMENT



MET Captain Shale, bearing neither scrip nor purse, but with a subtle air of adventure permeating his faded gingham shirt.

"I'm goin' to sail over to Ram Island to spend Sunday along o' Marcellus," said he.

Perhaps I looked my surprise.

"Sylphy's got me put under a topic. I ain't a mite skeered; but I knew 'twould hurt her feelin's, if I was home, if I didn't go to Sunday-school and expound it, and I ain't ekal to expoundin' of it."

"What is the topic?"

"*What is the condition of the dead,*" he replied, methodically.

The air was turbulent with birds, with butterflies, with joyous life; the air itself was alive—there was no death anywhere.

"Sylphy says she don't mean the state o' what's compostin' ag'in' the resurrection, but the condition of the cherubtic and seraptic hosts. I asked her," continued Captain Shale, in a gently reasonable voice, "how in dumnation did I know their condition?"

"To be sure."

"Hain't you ever heered," says she, 'of the wings and harps and sammody continuoally around the

FLOOD-TIDE

throne?' 'I have,' says I, 'but God gives revelations to me jest the same as anybody, and He tells me He'll let me pursue my industries in some nateral kind of a country, and converse wi' my friends mornin' and evenin' leanin' up agin' the pines an' bayberries somewheres in my old clo's.'"

"I'd like that better, too."

"I've been more outspoken sence the 'bookwriter' come to board with us. She bears me out in every argyment!" he confessed, a delighted blush irradiating his ancient countenance. "She's gone to see some friends over to the Reef, and Sylphy's paintin' the chairs."

We took a mutual gaze backward, where the continent surrounding the captain's house was sprinkled with bright objects reflecting back the glories of the sun.

"I told her they was yaller as the burnin' bush, already, but she'd found some pattern for enwreathin' of 'em in her last number o' the *Ladies' Bosom Comforter*, and she'll sweat around there all day in the sun twinin' them old yaller chairs over with smartweed and thimbleberry shapes. When a woman gets pucker-struck, ye can't dike nor withstand it. It's got to have its run."

"True."

We were passing the outskirts of Dorna's garden. The captain stooped down—as was our friendly wont in each other's vineyards—and selected a generous cucumber, weighty with the wisdom and juices of its prime. This, taking out his jack-knife, he pared with thoughtful economy, and devoured without salt or other condiment, but with exceeding relish.

The digestion of the Bar is unimpugnable, save only in the matter of topics.

ZEKE'S ENLARGEMENT

"My Sylphy's a beautiful creetur'," continued the kind old man, as the last delicious reminiscences of the cucumber gurgled down his throat, "and allas was. They use' to call her the Moose o' Moose Turnpike. I tell ye, a man 't loses his wife must be in a terrible tew!"

He was beginning to waver. Not for many seasons had he spent a night away from home; but Sylphy was painting the chairs in good health, and the topic was over his head, and he adhered to his resolution.

"The wind's breezin', and I must ketch the next puff," said he. "Here's hopin'!"

His form, majestic as an Abraham of old, was disappearing over the bank.

"Here's hoping!" I called after him earnestly. I turned my own footsteps towards Dorna's garden. At its farther edge I encountered a scene of great human sociability. For, in sight of Dorna's house, there was a spring whither tended all the inhabitants of the Bar at need, bearing empty pails for replenishing. The Bar custom was, on meeting a neighbor, to invert these pails by the wayside and, thus extemporaneously couched, to converse with the ease of those for whom fretful time has ceased and bland eternity begun.

Amid a group of inhabited pails, Dorna sat upon her own, she alone bustling; but Dorna's bustling was more suggestive of eternal calm than repose itself.

"I don't calkilate," she exclaimed, "for no habits to git the upper hands o' me!"

This was true. We dwelt in no confirmed manner at Dorna's. We breakfasted, we dined, we supped with a waywardness befitting the capricious instinct of the unfettered bird. We milked the cow now and then by lantern light, though the departing rays of

FLOOD-TIDE

the sun had sweetly wooed us to earlier opportunity. We rose at midnight on occasion, if the soul of melody seized us, and constrained the parlor organ to bellow forth, "Child of the world, are you tired of your bondage?" and other threnodies, while the black ocean heaved an accompaniment of its own, mysterious and jubilant, against the sleeping shore.

"I don't calkulate for no habits to git the upper hands o' me. Ol' Mis' Crome died o' heartbreak, they say, and never was the same afterwards, because her washin' sot over once till Tuesday. As for me, I stand unflinchin' on the Bible platform."

We all admitted this in silence, with no mental perturbation as to relevancy.

"Captain Alfred, won't you take my pail? I'll set on the dishpan—I've done dressin' my beets. I want your opinion on Zeke's enlargement."

I had not been unobservant of the fact that a gentle Jew, with the melancholy eyes of an artist, had been standing in the road fronting the group, upholding a framed picture.

"You know I'm expectin' Zeke's smack in any time now, and I've had his pictur' enlarged to surprise him. What do you say to it?"

Ezekiel Gleeson was in fact a seaman upon whom wind and wave and sturdy contact with the world had left their toughest imprint. The sketch before me had been taken from a youthful portrait, considerably antedating his marriage; and, still further smoothed and softened by the idealizing hand of the artist, now loomed largely before me as some unknown saint of pallid purity and ethereal mildness.

But the artist had tramped many miles with his work. He had no pail to sit upon; his eyes turned to me in pathetic appeal.

ZEKE'S ENLARGEMENT

"I like to look at it!" I said.

"So do I!" said Dorna, heartily. "It's a befitting tabernacle, and I don't know as I care that it don't call his present tabernacle up before me exact as to every hide and hair."

"It's the beautifulest fancy thing I ever see," said Grandma Gleeson from her pail. She had for her Ezekiel all a mother's admiration. "The only question is, do we want it fancy or do we want it nateral?"

An innocent indecision of choice dwelt on each countenance.

"Does it look," said Dorna, plainly addressing grandma, "anything like as he done in them unbesotted years?"

"Wal', Zeke's complection was allas a strong flesh-color—I shouldn't hardly recognize him complected the way he is in the pictur'. And Zeke's got a good, strong, bluntish Gleeson nose—I never see it whittled down that way, not even the winter he had pneumona and jinded the church. And Zeke's got a sufficient handsome mouth, ye all know. I never remember seein' him carryin' it around in no sech pucker-struck shape as it is there. And Zeke's expression—I needn't to say—ain't skeered o' nothin'! I don't never remember him blenchin' out so lambish, not even when he stood up to git married—"

"Wouldn't it be better," said Dorna, musingly—"Mr. Isaacson says he can change it forestandin' any ways we like—to have a mustash put on? Zeke's full bearded, ye know. I don't want that, but seems as though a mustash put on 'u'd make somethin' liker a God-created man of it and still not hender the looks."

Mr. Isaacson stepped forward with his pencils.

FLOOD-TIDE

"Brunette? Blond? I have never seen the Captain Gleeson."

"Wal'," said Dorna, blushing a little vainly at being called to direct the very hand of the artist, "make it a good earth brown, not clayish soil, but muck and swamp loom mixed, with a grizzle here and there. The Gleesons all gray off early."

"The ends of the mustache curled, waxed, or drooping?"

"I should like to see Zeke Gleeson tinkerin' over his mustash!" cried Dorna, with sincere indignation; "nor it don't droop neither—it stands out as stiff as any hog's bristles *I* ever see."

The patient artist proceeded to execute his task with the face of a rapt Raphael portraying deeds of solemn import.

We gazed at the result.

"It seems to me," at length spoke Tilly from her pail, "'t the rest o' the countenance don't bear out the fortitude o' the mustash."

"That's jest what I was thinkin'," said another; "'t looks as though he might ventur' into somethin' 't he'd straight get tunked on the head for."

Dorna's lips were compressed with awful decision.

"Put on a full beard the same as the mustash is a sample of!" she demanded.

Mr. Isaacson obeyed.

"Loosen out the nosterls a little, so's to give him air!"

It was done.

"Fierce off them eyebrows and make the hairs stick around every which way!"

She was instantly and implicitly obeyed.

"Hist up that forelock and make jest as much witchwork of it as your pencil 'll allow!"

ZEKE'S ENLARGEMENT

It was done.

"Draw a scar down from the middle hair-line to wind'ard o' the right temple, and don't make no ant track of it, neither! I ain't ashamed of it. 'Twas got in a good cause."

This, too, was done.

"Ease off that shirt front from lookin' like the stone tablets of the Old Testament laws, and reduce that choker collar down to nothin'. Open off there at the neck enough to show his windpipes, and put on jest as many hairs as 'll come inside the contract."

He obeyed; he never smiled—Mr. Isaacson. Concentrated and earnest was his work, as one under the conscious seal and compulsion of inspiration.

"Now!" said Dorna, nor in aught did any one gainsay her. The coon-cat indeed testified to the faithfulness of the finished work—this revengeful coon, whom Captain Zeke at times of shoreward abiding had found it necessary to chastise for his hateful misdemeanors. Detecting in the now sterling visage before us something of its former meek vulnerability, and basely taking advantage of the occasion, the cat, stealthily approaching the picture, bristled before it a fiery and insulting challenge to war and then spat loud and fiercely in its very face.

"You base-born epoch!" cried Dorna, springing from the dishpan and starting in pursuit of the fleeing criminal.

"Here he is, ma! here he is!" cried Dinsmore, suddenly bobbing up from the covert of a rock, captured cat in hand.

"Dinsmore Gleeson, I left you in the house under the commandment to stunt flies. I don't want we

FLOOD-TIDE

sh'd be so beset with 'em the very night o' your father's comin' home; and here you be, as usual, pitchin' your tabernacle anywheres except where you was told to pitch it. How many flies have you stunted?"

"Say, ma," cried Dinsmore, eagerly, "ain't you goin' to lick the coon for spittin' in pa's face?"

"No, I be not," said Dorna, snatching the cat under the old impulse of affection to her bosom. "If them that have souls act as you do, Dinsmore, what can we expect o' the poor dumb creeturs?"

"Then what do you set me to stuntin' poor dumb flies for?"

Dorna stooped for a switch. Dinny fled houseward. "I wouldn't want it spoken in the same breath," said she, returning with the embosomed cat, "but I've got a young one 't lays me low in a argyment every time. Ef he goes to showin' off all them brains when his father gits home, there's bound to be a touse. Where there's two Gleasons one's allas go'n' to set on top."

Our attention now reverted to Ezekiel's lusty portrait.

"I believe the contract agreed on was four dollars," said Dorna to the Jew.

"Four dollars for the picture," he replied, lifting his sad, dark eyes. "I present to you the frame!"

We marvelled at his goodness. The frame was glittering and elaborate. Dorna glowed at the greatness of his generosity. "I don't feel as if you'd ought to!" she cried.

He nobly persisted, adding, "I shall be obliged for some dinner."

There was now some friendly rivalry among the inhabitants of the pails as to which should have

ZEKE'S ENLARGEMENT

the artist to dine. Entertaining a peddler or other wanderer, at the Bar, meant placing him in the seat of honor at one's board, giving him the breast of the fowl, and playing to him on the parlor organ afterwards, while he lounged in the easy-chair.

Grandma Gleeson finally prevailed, from the fact that she had been making some special rich cake.

"And it's jest hove up in my mind," said she, "'t it must 'a' been nigh a sufficient time in the oven, 'n' what I sallied out for was to go down to the spring to get a sprig to try when 'twas done, 's well as to fill my pail. I must be gettin' into my shoes." She simply and decorously slipped her stockinged feet into those temporarily discarded articles of apparel, yawning at her side, and rose from her pail, which the Jew gallantly seized, and soon returned, brimming pail in one hand and green sprig for testing the cake in the other. Grandma Gleeson, who had the loveliest waving white hair and the color of a girl of sixteen, blushing took the other rut in the lane, and they walked away side by side.

"I suppose I must be getting into my shoes, too," said Dorna. Tilly's feet were already gracefully groping for hers.

Having joined the company rather late, I had not taken the trouble to put off mine, but I rose and, taking Dorna's pail, went to the spring, while she bore the framed Ezekiel to the house. And at about dusk that evening the expected smack, of which Ezekiel was captain, played sweetly from its whistle as it drove into the little harbor, "Home, home—sweet, sweet home." Soon a huge form loomed over the bank, heavily laden—gifts for wife and child—notably a bag containing eight watermelons, regarded as tropical fruit at the Bar.

FLOOD-TIDE

Ezekiel entered loudly; the surges of the Atlantic seemed to play about his person and to bellow from his voice.

"Fust look shoreward, I thought ye'd disappeared off the face o' the 'arth," said he. (The brush was rather high about the cottage.) "I got to go to choppin' to keep the house in sight, by thunder!"

His "enlargement," in its brilliant frame, not yet hung, stood leaning against the wall.

"Who's that?" said he, looking at it from across the table, his Gleeson mouth carnivorous with pie.

"Why, Zeke!" said Dorna.

"Is that me?"

Dorna nodded, with a contented smile.

"Wal', you take the most bestuntin' blows philosophical, I must say."

"Don't ye like it, Zeke?"

"Like it? No! But I can swaller a pill ef I got to. Why don't ye speak up?"

"I wanted it," said Dorna, gently and solemnly, "'n case 't anything sh'd happen."

"By Judas! woman, I sh'd say 't somethin' *had* happened!" said he, staring fixedly at the picture, even a knifeful of pie forgotten on its way to his mouth. "Ain't I *nothin'* but hair and scabs?"

Dorna was expressively silent, her look downcast.

"I c'n remember," he continued, his keen eyes growing thoughtful and soft, "when 't I uset to prink afore the mirror and tiddle over my necktie. Wal'—wal'."

Dinsmore could not eat; his face was one pale awe-spot of expectancy, and that expectancy was of watermelon. Even the accustomed event that must transpire between—namely, his whipping—seemed trivial to him, when his father, taking the

ZEKE'S ENLARGEMENT

birch-stick from behind the door, said, dispassionately, "Come, sonny," and the two went out into the shed together.

"I know," Dorna called after them, "that son ought to have his chastisement same as usual, but it had ought to be a light one, Zeke; he's been the patientest, ploddin'est boy ever growed on *this* Bar!"

Dinsmore, who, it was well understood, during the interim of his father's absence, had been as wicked and adventurous as a boy possibly could be, hardly gave one grateful glance to his mother, his anticipative eye fixed solely upon watermelon.

Considering the father's natural emotions of fondness on his return and Dorna's certificate of behavior, the whipping was evidently of a perfunctory and nerveless character. Ezekiel returned smiling, and Dinsmore without a tear. The former pulled out a giant melon from the bag, cut it in two, and handed half to his son.

"Git out into the world with it," he admonished him, "and don't bring no footprints of it around in here."

Dinsmore, with a look as of one entering the portal of paradise, received the offering in his arms, and was not slow in bearing it out into the world, that gracious friend whose wide bosom offers to a boy with a watermelon no blighting conventions of tablecloth or fork.

Indeed, it was the custom for even the maturest dwellers of the Bar, when absorbing this juicy fruit, to take no less than the whole planet as a base for its operations. So, when the captain handed me the other half of the melon, I took it as a tacit indication that I was to go out and make the earth my footstool and the sky my canopy, especially as he

FLOOD-TIDE

had already taken Dorna on his knee, and her bright face was frankly resting against his hirsute cheek.

It was good to see this heroic woman brave in blandishment as she was fearless and outspoken in war.

XX

DESPAIR AND MY WHITE LADY



INSMORE, with Johnny Bowles—whom the earth had delivered up at this opportune moment to be his companion in bliss—engaged to secrete that green-rinded reservoir of juices which I bore in safe-keeping until the morrow, and promised, with their hands on their already ensphered stomachs, not to meddle therewith.

I followed the shore path, where the first shadows were falling, my heart resting in silence and in absence on that strong soul who was my wife. A solace, whom I had selfishly seized in mortal desperation for her ruddy human glee and health, she had compassionated me in my poverty and despair. By so much was her love loftier than mine, it had led her by serene ways to me hidden. I had not kept pace with her, who, out of this simple, isolated existence, was growing refined and queenly beyond the altitude of queens.

To live apart from the world that had once slain me, to be delivered from the obligation of choice, and to have Infra's heart to lean upon—this dream absorbed me as I flecked the grass with my stick, pausing sometimes to gaze outward towards that last gleam of color waning inexpressibly over sea and sky. Thus, in a reverie, I heard a gentle voice, and

FLOOD-TIDE

turned to see Margaret Langthorne seated on a rock in the shade of the sycamores.

"Captain Alfred, you look sad. But take the good fortune and bear with the mistakes; there is no other way, and life is practically but a tumble of events for all of us."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, but you must not pretend. What was once the desperation of necessity is now but a pose you are continuing. There are birds in the air, and they tell me—what your communications with your agent have told you—that you are reinstated in the world financially, socially; you have but to take your position."

"Indeed! Indeed! I prefer to be here, where the fashion of this world has already passed away. I am not enamoured of this world's fashion."

"Nonsense! You should act the man for Infra's sake. There is something strong about her; she would soon outgrow any little eccentricities of a rustic nature; she would soon adapt herself to your condition, I am sure."

I smiled, and I trembled with a certain indignation. "In that case I would not take her from the Bar. But she would be constant to herself—and it is true enough, the world needs a copy!"

"You are fortunate; the tumble of events is all in your favor—health and wealth restored, your ideal found."

"My ideal found."

"Well, then"—she laughed low—"you can afford to be kind, to shake hands over the pitiful errors of the past. Have I not done well by you? And can you not be brotherly towards one who is weary and heart-broken?"

DESPAIR AND MY WHITE LADY

Her brown face rested on her hand; her eyes dwelt seemingly on the landscape, but I knew their peculiar expression of despair, wearing its mask of cold and even smiling haughtiness.

"With all my heart, Margaret." I leaned, Bar fashion, against a friendly tree. "I want to help you."

"You can—for you cannot preach. You are not yet a saint, except nominally, and you do not know how to preach. You have acquired the Bar health—and you had always a Bar brain. An attack of any brilliancy had always the effect of reducing you to marvel and to silence."

It was true I had once reposed mentally on her faith; her bold analysis of me, as taking me into her possession, had utterly charmed and fascinated me. I knew now that it had never helped me—and now the fascination was gone. I did not see more clearly, but I seemed to stand upon a rock. So I said nothing, but smiled.

She sighed. "After all, none are strong but children. I had the misfortune to be born old, Alfred."

"You grow young every year, then."

She turned her graceful head to me for a moment, and her eyes filled with laughter. "Reminiscences of old society lessons! I congratulate you on your memory for polite phrases, Captain Alfred. It serves you occasionally."

"I do not forget; but, to tell you the truth, thinking of the past bewilders me—that is, much putting of thoughts together and trying to find their sequence and solution. I know it was all for good; but, further than that—to try to hurt no one, but to do them a kindness if I can, I confess to you it is all that I know, Margaret."

FLOOD-TIDE

"The Bar grammar, too." But her profile was towards me now, and it was sad and thoughtful. "Arch is in love with me."

"Yes."

"Without exaggeration, I may say he is madly in love with me."

"When men love you, that seems to be the way they love you."

Her dark face reddened, her eyes flashed.

"Is it impossible for a sane being to love me and be true to me?"

"You are not yourself sane; you are not yourself true."

She gripped the bowlder with her firm right hand as though she would have hurled it at me. But my words had come from no anger and from no height.

"Mental infant," she said, at length, "what is sanity?"

"It is in all the world in our relationships not to harm another; to be willing to harm ourselves rather than to harm another."

"Second question in the primer: What is truth?"

"It is the same as sanity."

"You are lazy; you won't answer *two* questions. Oh, the Bar! the Bar! I would for my own content I had been born of you. The first thought is the last thought, they say. It may be true. But I am, as I said, too old for naturalization. Listen. I am tired. I would like to go out naturally, without fuss or pain, with the tide; no more sorrow; no more joy, which is more grievous than sorrow. Saint Alfred, I fancy it is the happy who pray; the afflicted and accursed are bold—and I am the sport of an evil fate."

DESPAIR AND MY WHITE LADY

"Never own it. The moment you love somebody well enough to work for them, it will all change."

"The Bar grammar. I was fond of you, poor child. Fate frowned on you just long enough to part us. I was fond of Norman Saxe. Fate in the shape of that little enchantress, Alpena, again stepped in the way. There were instances before these—I have been indeed a much-loved woman. Now it is this young Hercules (Adonis, he is, too), Arch; and the whole affair is absolutely impracticable, yet at every turn, of late, fate throws him in my path. His boat will be here presently; he will have come to take me home."

"And you are glad that he will come."

The shadows were growing heavy; her dusky face had taken on a paler hue, her eyes were wide and sorrowful, but the mouth kept firmly its scornful discontent. "I am not a heartless woman. It would be better if I were; this world is no place for tender hearts. I love my profession: the state of my health at present has put an embargo upon that. I had ideals in every line of attainment possible to me, the highest—the highest. And everywhere I have been balked and beaten. I am not, I never shall be, anything! I look back upon a road full of obstructions, snares, pitfalls, wherein I have utterly failed. What is the use of it all? It is ridiculous to suffer so—and to no end."

"But, Margaret, to look back along a road and say, 'I have failed,' in some deeper sense of the meaning of what all roads are designed for, is better than to sit self-conscious on the pinnacle of any human achievement."

"Is it?" she exclaimed, passionately. "What is the design, pray?"

FLOOD-TIDE

"To love well enough to work outside one's self, in spite of pain, in spite of despair."

"Such devotion is not appreciated."

"Oh, my God!—don't you know that you can't be cheated? that it's all clear climbing and gaining? Don't you know that if some soul cried to you, 'Love me! trust me!' and you lavished the best of your nature on them without measure or stint, however unworthy they might be, you are only in the sublime purpose and largess of God that cannot be tricked or depleted for all its sweet, grand giving? And don't you know that it is also in that purpose that at last that soul, so loved, so trusted, looks up—climbs up—to share in that same greatness of trust, that same fearlessness of giving? Hark to them! We're of the same—we're of the wind! we're of the sea!—who is to limit our resource? We can laugh and give, I tell you! We can exult and give! and still abounding, give! give! give!"

"Child, you can preach."

"No."

"You can preach, but you have neither such a headache nor such a heartache as mine. Briefly and practically, I wish that I were dead. Come here a moment and sit beside me in the old way. The dying are not hampered by the world; the dead of heart are equally immune. Do you remember how we sat here together? It seems so long ago."

Her hand was like ice in mine. "Margaret—Margaret—you're a poor coward to die; you're a poor coward. I know it by my own life. You are proud and scornful, at least; carry it out nobly. Do some duty, in pain. If you cannot have great love and happiness, go without them and work just with constancy. When the call comes, you can

DESPAIR AND MY WHITE LADY

stand up, the greater for all that life has denied you, and say, 'I was brave!' You can say that—'I was brave!' Go and live and work for *some* soul, Margaret—go!"

"Dear Saint Alfred, you are in the clouds and my head is throbbing. How warm and strong your hand is, but it loves the touch of mine no longer; it is only kind. It has grown to be a simple Bar hand, too, awkward, knotted—"

Over the crest of the cliff, below which lay a familiar boat-landing, a form had risen, and it came towards us quietly—the form of a woman, hatless, in a simple cotton gown open at the throat—all in white, she seemed. She walked heavily, yet as if upborne by some beauty and sweetness more graceful than any physical grace, and amid the shadows we saw her smile.

It was Infra. On the instant blind malediction against Margaret had surged within me. "You have ruined my life once," it stormed in my heart to say—"you have ruined me again with this my beloved one, my wife!" Margaret herself had risen, white, as if to gasp out some earnest explanation.

But Infra stayed us. She had come from death—the pillow where Beth's face lay in peace at last—and its light and awe were still upon her. She came to me and put her arms about my neck. "It is over, Alfred. She is gone."

"Infra!" cried Margaret, "I was sitting here alone—your husband strolled this way by chance—he would not even have seen me, but I called to him—I asked him to listen to me brotherly—I poured out my despair and sorrow to him—he was kind, but he stood apart—I begged him to sit beside me for a little as in old times—to—to take my hand—

FLOOD-TIDE

the touch of his hand was only kind—compassionate—I was saying that. He loves you—you only. I am desperate enough; do not let me be accursed by thinking I have brought misunderstanding—”

“Dr. Langthorne,” said Infra, interrupting her gently—my arm was about my wife, and her head was on my breast—“do you think I doubted my husband?”

Margaret faltered where she stood; she was trembling violently, her eyes were vacant as the blind.

“You did not in the least doubt him under the circumstances?”

“I did not doubt.” If then my wife had been posing for greatness! but her look was the sun from a cloudless soul, her eyes had the straightforward joy of unvexed truth.

“I would go through hell,” cried the dark woman, staring wildly at her, “to be loved as *you* love!”

“Well, so I will love you, Margaret.” Infra had left my side and stepped towards her.

“Do not touch me! Leave me, both of you! I want to be alone. I am accursed. I am in pain! Go, with your happiness—go!”

She would have pushed my darling from her, but the white form stayed her by the mute appeal of its physical condition. Infra went to her as she had come to me.

“You are so ill,” she murmured, “and I—I am a nurse. I want to leave my husband and go home with you to-night. I want to take care of you. I can help you—can help you; poor child—poor child!”

The strong, caressing arm drew the sick head to her bosom, and the happy woman freely offered soul and life to bear this other’s pain.

DESPAIR AND MY WHITE LADY

Margaret, with a gasp, leaned to her passionately. I had never seen this woman weep; the despair and bitterness of her soul she gave now to tears; she clutched my wife's shoulders as the drowning clutch and cling. Infra led her to the rock, gathered her in her arms, let the storm rave and pass.

"Why can I not die?" she said then, in dreary calm. "I am so tired!"

"Well, yes—die to your weary self, Margaret."

"I am so tired!"

"I have read it in the Book—there's nothing so safe with God as a tired bird. Trust Him."

Arch came seeking along the path, and paused before us, as though he had been with us through this scene, intuitively knowing.

"I've come to take you home," he said.

"Arch will take me home," said Margaret, in her even voice, rising.

He stood waiting her like some bold figure from the ancient, simplest times, his strong features devoid of all cunning save that of staying-rope and carrying-sail.

"Arch will take me home—will you not?"

The trace of suffering in her voice, her tear-swollen face—it was a strange scene, and the pride which divides heart from heart had left this little spot of earth. Before us all he pressed with his trembling hands tenderly the parted hair on her temples.

"No harm shall come to her," he said.

XXI

THE WEDDING OF THE FOUR-POLE JUMPER



E had emerged from the woods southward into the fields back of the overhanging bluffs. We were invited to an occasion of supreme festivity, but a horned animal of fierce demeanor stood pawing in our path.

"I don't make back tracks for no bull," exclaimed Dorna. Zeke was away again with the smack, and she had to face the world alone. "When I've walked over here three miles to the Middle Narrows to see Bell Dewsup married," she explained, minutely but firmly, to the portentous creature in her path, "I'm a-goin' by, or know the reason why, ef I have to ram my parasol down your throat!"

She advanced with this furred weapon. The bull listened, accepted at once the comprehensive justice of her remarks, and turned respectfully away. We followed our admiral, reposing more than ever upon her dauntless spirit.

Infra had sent me—Infra, who was now especially a home-keeping body; and I carried our wedding-gift among the others. Infra did not know that I might have taken a diamond or a bank-note, and our satisfaction had been mutual over the five pounds of sweet dried haddock which I bore, and which cast no reflection upon Tilly, for instance,

WEDDING OF THE FOUR-POLE JUMPER

swinging her donation of a washboard, or Grandma Gleeson jingling along with a tea-kettle.

There were a few scattered houses on the bluffs, among them the one where Alpena dwelt — this young lady appeared among the guests, in simple white, indifferent and tall; there were rumors about her birth, seductively mysterious; it had been whispered that her mother was a lady. But the bride had plainly been captured from afar off at Pomp Island and brought to the home of the groom as an altogether more convenient and satisfactory quarter for the wedding-rites. She sat in the crotch of an apple-tree, chewing gum, and, having accepted the conditions of civilization, gazed at us as largely and calmly as a ruminating cow.

"It's punishin' out a dreadful hour when anybody's waitin' to git married," Dorna addressed her, cordially; "but it ain't to be spoken of along o' the harissments that comes afterwards. Here's hopin'!"

The girl chewed, smiled, was as wholesomely independent of articulate accents as any of the sublime objects of nature about her.

There were witty mutual salutations among the guests. "Ef the dog hadn't always been loafin' around he'd 'a' ketched the fox," said Captain Fyryards, commenting on the sloth of a brother mariner who lay sunning himself luxuriously with a hen-coop for a pillow.

"I thought old Sol Graybill was dead and buried," rejoined the recumbent, alluding to the other's growing resemblance to his dreams of antiquity. "Can ye tell me when he was up and resurrected?"

There was no front door, which would have been dangerous on the face of the bluffs. Besides, the wind blew there a ceaseless wild career of its own.

FLOOD-TIDE

We had gathered at the shed door, and by instinct we remained there in the sun in the lee of the house where the bride-elect sat on the apple-bough. Then the ancient door-latch lifted, and Captain Robbins, the father of the groom, spoke with singular solemnity:

"Won't ye come in and compose yourselves? The infillin' is ready."

We were already as composed as mortals could be, but we rose at this significant summons and followed him.

"Will ye set down and take a view?"

The loaded table in the centre of the room was the object alluded to, and it was indeed worthy of our persistent regard. This part of the house facing the sea was doorless, as has been said; the windows were wide open and a glad gale blew in, which would have scattered viands less substantial; these were formed to contend with the boisterous elements. Individual plates were set and loaded, not with one layer only, but beets towered red among grassy pease, parsnips ensteeped potatoes, "shag" surmounted veal.

As we thus gazed, Captain Robbins again marshalled us solemnly:

"Hitch right up to the table from where you're each a-settin' of, and strike her in as near a bee-line from the p'int ye start from as ye kin, so as not to make no confusion."

In our endeavor to comply accurately and expeditiously with this request, a noise like the reverberation of thunder echoed through the room.

Captain Robbins's countenance grew suddenly thoughtful and blank. "I'm afraid I'm left fore-standin' on the blessin'," said he. "I suppose,

WEDDING OF THE FOUR-POLE JUMPER

however much we've done without one afore, we'd ought to have one to-day."

There were gray hairs among us and a generally reverent attitude, but it so chanced that no professional avenue of grace sat in our midst. Grandpa Gleeson was there; the wind-blown food was already cold, however, and no one had the heart to ramble with him through the epochs of Revelation.

"It's somethin' I ain't used to," said Captain Robbins, with sublime simplicity, "but it's got to be done—so here's hopin'!"

He spread his mighty hands over the board.

"O Lord, Thou hast been with us in all the trials of the past; help us to face them now set before us. Amen. All fetch your oars into the row-locks and begin!"

The solemnities had now reached a point that nothing could have touched with mirth, for they were borne conscientiously. The weather and the state of the wind were safe topics.

"She's blowin' clean from the south'ard and fa'rly shakes the spoon-holder."

"I told my folks this mornin' it was goin' to air up. Much obleedged to ye, Robbins, for settin' me here in the lee o' the Franklin. I ain't so robust as I once was."

"Wal', one way or another, the wind's allas breezin' here to the bluffs, but I can set firm yet in the midst o' any eddy 't God can create."

"Let your plate be took out for some more infillin', Brother Fyryards."

"Thank ye, no. I ain't no great stuffer on beets and shag, though the's nothin' more proper and sustainin' by way of infillin' than they be."

"I know 't some makes light of a weddin'-meal,

servin' up frozen milk-swash along o' seed-cookies and sech like, but ef the's any time folks need a meal of clear, sheer *vittles* it's when they're goin' to git married."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen!" said a commend-ing voice.

"I consider 't you're a-sayin' somethin'!" came other accents of approval.

The bride had the beautiful gift of unconsciousness of self and of oneness with nature and all wholesome hungry life. She ate clearly, loudly, her handsome teeth crunching through blood-red beets that were not ruddier than her lips. Gust Robbins, the groom, was in a beaming delirium of joy.

"The' wa'n't no fork stacked among my tools," said he at last, realizing this oversight in conventional and material things through a flash that shone luridly for an instant and then disappeared, leaving him rapt and smiling. "Never mind—it's too late now; and some ways or other," he mused, glancing down at his empty plate in dizzy bliss, "I've pursued my industries in the executin' o' my vittles without one."

"Suppose we back water in the same way as we hove to, aimin' at a direc' bee-line," said the father, half rising at the end, consciously oppressed—though brave—as the master of unfamiliar solemnities.

This was a ticklish performance, but we set all our skill to it and landed safely, with the exception of Grandpa Gleeson, who was shaky and indirect, and who bunted completely into the bride. She could have withstood a dozen such shocks, and she alone failed the import of the occasion by laughing hilariously aloud, where she stood unvanquished and even unmoved.

WEDDING OF THE FOUR-POLE JUMPER

"Ain't you an old Isiick?" said she to grandpa, with wholly forgiving good-nature.

We now recovered the tone of the ceremony. The table was not only cleared, it was borne bodily from the room, and a cage made of cotton damask in a design of water-lilies was brought in and set firmly on its stanchions.

"The jindin' of Gust and Bell," said the oppressed father, "was to have been done by a jestice o' peace, who has been infilled and sent back on his ways to Tunkhaven, sence we have now the luck swooped down upon us providential of bein' jinded by a minister. A legal jindin' is all right, but there's a sorter safetguard and dock-hawser, in the touse o' the years to come, t' think 't ye was jinded by a minister.

"Our neighbor, Ziba Skank, has jest fetched one over, sayin' that he lit down on him about mid-day to-day, in the way ministers does light down on these parts permiscuous, now and then, accordin' to their own notion, and weighs anchor when they've had enough of it.

"He's an advent, and Gust and Bell has set out that they're goin' to be saints or die; but in the matter of jindin', we all know it don't make no difference; they're consentin', and have gone up-stairs to put the finishin' puckers on to their attirements."

A square, stolid man, bearded and grave, had been seated as a new centre of interest during this harangue. He was very much soiled and absolutely self-possessed. The happy Gust was not long in prinking. He was seen, through a window, descending the ladder that led from his bower on the left hand. The bride's arraying suite was an apartment to the right, and the ladder was transported

to her window, "stairs" being merely a nominal term for this method of ascent and descent.

Gust stepped leapingly in through the shed door, properly unobservant of our presence, lifted the curtain, and entered the cage. We had glimpsed a baby-blue ribbon tied about his massive red throat, and a pair of sharply pointed shoes that filled us with emotions of wonder.

Soon an admonitory tapping of the foot was heard from Bell's quarters overhead.

"Ain't ye comin' down the larder, Bell?"

"Lift up that trap!" came in a proud voice from above.

The trap-door interiorly connecting the festal hall with Bell's chamber was lifted. "Shall we bring the larder in here, Bell?"

"Clear the way, there!"

A wide swath was instantly allowed; even we on the outskirts drew our chairs back with an instinct of trembling caution, and a substantial angel, in adornment many-hued as a rainbow, swept down through the ceiling, landed softly, even springingly, on its feet, and with a proud toss of its head disappeared within the cage.

We pitied Gust, who had descended effeminately by the ladder; we felt, though we could not see, his abased and humiliated blushes. This reproach to his manhood had not killed the springs of affection, however. He was tall and the mere summit of his curly head had been visible above the cage; as Bell entered this summit disappeared momentarily and the echoes of a soul-surrendering kiss pealed through the room.

The minister now advanced in close proximity to the cage, though there was no visible union be-

WEDDING OF THE FOUR-POLE JUMPER

tween him and the objects of the function he was performing.

"Bell Dewsup!" he called.

"Yes, sir!" came fearlessly from the cage.

"Gust Robbins!"

"Here, sir!"

"Are you two firmly made up on the solemn platform of what is about to be done?"

Some whispered colloquy appeared to be going on behind the curtains as to which should reply to this question, and how. Gust, however, taking this opportunity to retrieve the ignominy of the ladder business, soon called out, cheerily:

"We do!"

"Then I will perceed. Bell Dewsup, I've stopped to Pomp Island sometimes, and I know 't you come o' good jumpin' stock. For, as our brother has said, to contend together in the touse o' the years to come, you'll need not only the safetguard and dock-hawser o' faith, but you'll need also and specially good sound corporal systems. The last time I tetched on to Pomp Island we see from our boat a squad o' beautiful damsols down by the backbone thereof a-clammin'. At our approach they ran, stood right up—you to their foremost, Bell Dewsup—and jumped a four-pole fence.

"Gust Robbins and Bell Dewsup, 'tain't nothin' cunnin' to git married. The's an awful sight o' strings to it—and it ain't all the man's fault, neither," added this dusty priest, rather bitterly.

"I wish 't I might say, May there be no cloud to your silver lining; but I can't, for I know 't there will be. You'll have to jest comfort one another and remember 't two heads is better 'n one, if one is a sheep's head—"

FLOOD-TIDE

The curtain parted, and Gust sprang out. "Do you mean to say 't my Bell's a sheep's head?" he demanded, with clenched fist, a magnificent fire in his eyes.

"No, my son," returned the other, with the utmost sadness of composure; "when two's a-standin' as you stand behind them curtings, we all know which the sheep's head is."

Gust returned, and the soiled and wayworn priest continued:

"'Wives, be obedient to your husbands,' is the doctrine, but we all know it wa'n't no married man said that.

"No, my dear young friends behind the curting, life ain't all a weddin'-day, with your vittles set for ye, and a lot o' frien's 't has put their purses in their shoes and locked their front doors to come over and bring ye gifts and see ye jinded. Ye'll have to cut your own fodder now. You, Gust, 'll have to take off them razor-toed shoes 't you bought out o' that old job lot over to the Crumples, and 't's three sizes too small for ye, and put on yer rubber boots and march with toes square to the music.

"There'll come times when ye'll both of ye want to sell your house and go out on the Open, cruisin'; but jest have patience and do the will o' God, and ye'll knit together to the patient works o' this 'arth and the glory o' God. Voyagin' is all vain except it's done for the labors of love and duty. I've allas wanted to see Brooklyn Bridge, but my duties lays along this coast, and I hain't never seen Brooklyn Bridge.

"You, Gust, won't be bringin' Bell a clover bunch and kissin' her as ef the' was a three-master struck on Eagle Rock, but you'll be bringin' home your 'arnin's, and she'll be doin' her faithful duties and

WEDDING OF THE FOUR-POLE JUMPER

thinkin' of ye, and, by-and-by, havin' your picture enlarged.

"I pernounce ye man and wife, and I make no doubt 't through the marcy o' God, along o' all the rest of us, ye'll list into port somehow. Amen."

There should be singing before the pair were released from the cage. As usual, there was a coyness, a lack of premeditation, in this matter. Several ladies sparred back and forth with mutual flattery as to who should go to the organ and what song should be sung. It fell naturally at last upon our acknowledged cantatrice, Dorna, whose selections were always courageous rather than special or pertinent.

"We will sing 'Jedgment Day,' " she announced, with her usual firmness of decision.

Those who have never heard this song sung—or wailed, rather—to the tenor of a parlor organ by voices attuned to the shrill melodious halloo of storm and sea, can have no idea of the refrain, twice repeated, that filled that wind-swept room :

"They cried for the rocks and the mountings—
They cried, but their cry was too late;
They cried for the rocks and the mountings—
They cried, but their cry was too late."

The caged pair were very silent during this holocaust of regretful memory; as the last wail swept out and mingled with the omniscient tide, they emerged arm in arm and heroically faced us.

"If," said the father of the young husband, in a tone still strictly sombre, "any one 'd like to rise up and speak these two a fair word on the voyage and the touse they've set out upon, here and now they stand ready to receive that word."

FLOOD-TIDE

There was nothing now to restrain Grandpa Gleeson, who loved to be forward while others hesitated delicately in the background. He felt that many eyes were upon him, and he did not dare Revelations. He sprang cantishly forward, and, seizing a hand of both bride and groom, joined them, taking on suddenly an air of the deepest import.

"Gust," he said, "the wisdom of man is great, but the suttility of the woman is greater. May you, Bell, so unite your suttility to Gust's wisdom, and may you, Gust, so order your wisdom to jog along in tow of Bell's suttility, that you two may cast anchor at last without having struck bow-foremost on to the great dragon, whose name, until a time and a time—"

"Belay there!" cried Captain Fyryards, gathering courage and coming forward stanchly. "Gust and Bell, the squall of jindin' affection has struck ye and knocked ye for the time bein' on yer beam-ends. Now ye'll have to shift the ballis' in your hold and right yerselves as best ye kin for this mutational viyage of life. Don't be allas poundin' into the lee o' somethin', but stand square to the helm and take the wind face to, jest as you're a-takin' it in this room, this minit. Stand firm, I say, and take the blast face to! Them's my words."

Aunt Rocksy Tate came forward, in mits.

"It seems to me," she said, practically, "you two have got about all the remarks you can chew on for this present time bein'. In the hard times and the poor sleddin' of my life, it's allas been a comfort to think 't 'So 'tis, and it can't be no tiser.' You, Bell, hain't got to be a great moon calf no longer, huntin' around for a beau. You've both played high line and ketched one another. Gettin' married has allas

WEDDING OF THE FOUR-POLE JUMPER

seemed to me in some ways like dyin' or other harissements. When it's over, it's over, and hain't got to be gone through with no more. I wish ye sufficient jiy."

Dorna rose from the organ-stool with an impressive air, as though there were that of the deepest solemnity which had not yet been touched upon.

"I hail you, brother and sister," she exclaimed, "as saints, marching and travelling yourselves forwards! Though not yet there, as ever gaining from that whereon you stood yourselves the day before! Let the accents of joy and the worl'ly wisdom drop from your ears, and bear it on your hearts 't you two has started out on the journey of the Lord, and to ponder sech of the gospel as accordin' to your feeble understandin' you can make any wit of, and to sacrifice yourselves for it, fearin' neither nothin' nor nobody, in all sech ways as you therein accordin' to the feebleness of your understandin' ever heern tell of."

XXII

PLOTTING BY THE NARROWS



OLD—bold as Dorna herself—was this shore by the Narrows.

A river, a sea, the vaster sea, all open; stormy gateways of island, of gigantic boulder. Overlooking all, the threatening cliffs. No wonder that Alpena—fragile being—stepped nevertheless as though the world were hers. It lay within her horizon, the lordly gateways, the tide to all ports.

“Hangin’ around over there to Robbins’ to-day has put ye in a weddin’ fever, hey?”

“It was the damn’dest performance, Dave.”

Tyrolese Dunbar slapped his knee and laughed, sneeringly.

“’Twould been all right if it had been you and Alpy, hey?”

“Well, all right. I confess I’m not particular about the sort of ceremony if Alpena could be made my wife. We could make up in style afterwards. Where is she?” Dunbar chewed his cigar nervously.

“Mis’ Bratt says she reckons she’s sheered off down to the Bar to stay awhile along o’ that pompous woman-creetur’ ’t’s rusticator’ there to old Shale’s.”

“The Bookwriter?”

PLOTTING BY THE NARROWS

"Damn if I know, or keer!" Dave had just come in from the boat, and was pulling off his long boots.

"She's stout, Dave; she's not pompous."

"It's the same word, 'cordin' to my 'rethmetic," blazed Dave: "and when I give a word, that's enough! young sand-hopper. See here, woman, when ye goin' to git me some supper? Ye're slow as stock-still—have to take a landmark to see if ye move! Ef I'm goin' to have anything to eat, I want it!"

Dave Marlow's face was not villanous; it was hugely animal and boyish: the red-brown hair curled tightly, the eyes were blue.

"The table's all ready, soon as you're a mind to fetch your pelt up to it," said Mrs. Bratt, calmly; "whilst I take my floor cloth and make a road through where your boots has tracked."

Dave laughed in surly fashion as he neared the table. "Alpy goes where she likes, same as me," he threw back at Dunbar, "and she shall, too, by gosh!"

"Oh, certainly! certainly!" Dunbar jingled the coin in his pockets, played absent-mindedly with the cover of a worn check-book.

Dave ate hungrily. "Call this gooseberry sauce, Mis' Bratt? There's more flies in it than gooseberries. Why don't ye git on to their tracks? God don't give me no peace nowheres. There's about three millions of 'em aboard the boat."

"Why don't ye have a screen over the cuddy?" answered Mrs. Bratt.

"My Lord, woman, how many times I got to tell ye ye don't know nothin'?"

"How many herrin' ye got?"

"A hundred barrels, and I don't know where in hell I'm goin' to put 'em: boat only eighteen inches out o' water. Beans? Don't want none. I don't

FLOOD-TIDE

know how that fool pilot o' Dr. Saxe's ever gits around: he don't know a ledge between here and Bopaire. I sh'd go ashore five hunderd times a day if I didn't know no more 'n he does."

"Why don't you offer yourself for the place, Dave?" said Mrs. Bratt.

"Why in hell don't you freeze your lips and give your tongue a sleigh-ride?" he rejoined.

This was a forcible proposition, but Mrs. Bratt was equal to it.

"Tryin' to have any conversation with you, Dave Marlow, is like combin' a pig's back the wrong way: and, speakin' o' combin' hairs, I don't think anybody 'd call you pucker-struck Dave Marlow, ef you'd jest draw a rake through yours afore you come to the table. I know no ordinary tools 'd work into it, but maybe you could smooth it over a little with a blueberry rake if you tried hard."

Under full cannonade Dave fell. He fell now.

"Where 'd you git this butter?" he growled.

"Over to Mis' Tate's—thirteen cents a pound; she set it down two pounds and an ounce."

"Damn the ounce!" expostulated Dave, with some justice. "By Judas, woman, is this the only milk ye got kickin' around?"

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen! Dave Marlow, you're gittin' worse 'n a Feejee. You're a-slangin' and blaspheming wuss 'n a pirate. Poor Bayrucks has got the repotation o' wickedness made fast on to him, but he's a suckin' babe along o' you. Dave, won't you go down to the Bar to meetin' to-night? The's a minister lit down, and he's goin' to preach."

"I wouldn't go ef the Old Boy himself was goin' to preach!" continued Dave, with lucid obstinacy.

"I don't calkulate for no present grace for ye, for

PLOTTING BY THE NARROWS

ef I did I sh'd get my calkulations stepped on," sighed Mrs. Bratt; "but some seed might be dropped on ye 't 'd veer ye 'round a little in years to come."

"I seen the sea-sarpint to-day."

"Dave!"

"Sure. He chucked his head up, same as I've told ye afore, and then dove under. The' was sech a swell—"

"Dave Marlow, ye needn't be gettin' off your bulls and bears on me. Ye'll stay ashore to-night, won't ye?" she added, in a gentler tone.

"No; I'm goin' down to the cuddy."

"Why?"

"'Cause I'm tired to death o' you folks gangin' on to me. I wish to Moses 't I could sell my house and go a-cruisin'."

Tyrolese Dunbar coughed hopefully, in explanation of his continued presence. Dave noisily pushed back his chair from the table.

"Wal', young sand-hopper, let's go out into God's air," he said; but they avoided the bluffs and took secret and quiet refuge in the woodshed.

"Wal'," said Dave, who yet had something noble in his brutal visage, "heave it up, Tyrry, whatever's in ye."

"I've a plan, Dave."

"I bet ye have."

"And you'll have as much reason to keep my plan quiet as I have. See?"

"Heave it up."

"I'm going to marry Alpena. I am going to make her my true and honorable wife. Dave"—the young man paused and regarded Dave from a firm standpoint, keenly—"are you Alpena's natural father? Come, now?"

FLOOD-TIDE

Dave Marlow turned passionately white. "I ain't so much your chum as you think I be; and, when it comes to sass, the man 't sasses me's usually ketched up by the leg and heaved overboard som'er's. Take a pipe and smoke on that afore you go any further."

"See here, now, I'm a gentleman. I've never mentioned my suspicions—suspicions only; I don't know anything about it—to a soul, and I'm not going to. I want a fair compact with you, and I'm going to do a mighty handsome thing, Dave—a handsomer thing than you'll ever catch a chance at again in all your lifetime."

"Ef you've got anything to say, stop making your brags and out with it."

"I've bought a yacht double the size of Norman Saxe's and worth four times the money, and she's on her way up into these waters. She's white oak, well salted, Dave—somethin' to turn to wind'ard."

Dave's ears were large. Dunbar's nautical terms in this instance were sound. Dave knew the young man had wealth enough to waste in any luxury, and his mouth watered.

"Ain't you rather sick of smelting around here for herrin', and layin' around day and night with 'em in the *Old Bum*?"

Tyrolese had dropped into the vernacular.

"The *Old Bum* ain't so bad a boat," muttered Dave.

"Oh, no, she ain't cranky, is she?"

"Damn her!" said Dave, suddenly; "the's many a time, this last year, I wish 't she'd strike ag'in' a rock and stave her face off!"

"I want you to be master of my vessel when she comes: captain's rig, mess and wine, and two hundred dollars cash per month. How's that?"

PLOTTING BY THE NARROWS

"You hain't heaved up the insides of it yet."

"No. Alpena Marlow will never marry Dr. Saxe. I am not afraid of that."

"Why not? He's after her, and he's six times the man you be."

Dunbar colored through his mottled skin, and sneered. "I have made some study of womankind, Dave. Most girls are scheming to marry, and to marry rich. Alpy doesn't wish to marry. She is a queen, by Jove! She gets attached to people all right, and she lets people get attached to her; but when it comes to giving herself up and marrying, she turns sentimental every time. She finds some high-flown objection or other that she moons away on and calls out her conscience for a figure-head; and that pompous woman, as you call her—Mrs. Temple—aids and abets her every time she falls off her contract. That's the size of it."

"I guess you've taken correct bearin's on that," said Dave, with a grin.

"If Norman Saxe hadn't had that turn about with Margaret Langthorne, there might have been some chance for him—not much, when it came actually to marriage; but as soon as Alpy began to think the matter over with those dark eyes of hers fixed on the moon—Jove! but she's a beauty, Dave! She's so tall, for one thing!"

"I know that seems to be liked," said Dave, with an air of not being behind in the artistic judgment of the day. "I never see a crittur lank up as she did; and she don't appear to need no more lead on her keel, neither; she ain't a bit cantish. She stands and she walks jest as plumb as that!"—he held up his massive hairy hand perpendicularly—"jest as plumb as that!"

FLOOD-TIDE

"She is perfect, I think, Dave; and now for common-sense, which you and I have and Alpy has not. Alpena is over twenty now, although she is childish, living here in the woods. She—she—she seems to be a lady somehow by birth. Well, do you want her to carry on this sentimental kind of business, and grow an old maid, and have her friends fall off, and wither and die up here in the wind out of the world? Or do you want her to queen it over fine houses, and trail silk around the way she could trail it, and lead off womankind as she could lead by her beauty, and be a woman herself full-blown and happy, instead of an old maid dying in here among the firs?"

"I guess you're right," said Dave, and scratched his head, thoughtfully. "I wish 't I didn't know 't you was the devil!"

"Pooh! I'm acting with magnanimity—I am. I fancy Alpy. Not many fellows with my money would look for their lady over in this eagle ranch, I tell you. And it's not because I couldn't have my pick at home either, Dave. I am planning well for you and Alpy. If you don't like the chance, you can quit it," said Dunbar, growing more recklessly confident as he watched Dave's hungry, boyish expression. "Now, see here—it is going to be beautifully done, as a gentleman would. Alpy will bless us with both hands a year from now—yes, three months from now, I hope.

"Look here, I propose that we cruise about, as we like, for a while, and get the hang of the thing (and keep our eye on things here); have just crew enough to do the work—I may be ashore a good deal;—it's practically your vessel. You can cruise off and take your bearings. You know the long coast?"

"I know the coast? I know every coast, by thun-

PLOTTING BY THE NARROWS

der! I've lived some fifty years, young man, and thirty o' them years has been clear, sheer viyagin'."

"You're all right, Dave, or you wouldn't have got the job. Now see here, along in a couple of months or so, but while the weather's still fine, we are going to be good enough and sensible enough to play the neatest little joke on Alpy, all straight and in good style: we will pile up luxury all 'round her. She shall have a woman with her, of course—a trained lady's maid. I'll have a clergyman on board. We'll win her over to the wedding—see? You'll take us south a ways, then put us ashore, and we'll go on to my town house. You know what sort of a place that is, Dave, for you've seen it. Fancy Alpy queening it there, by Jove! It shall be all her own way."

Tyrolese trembled a little with excitement and his eyes shone.

"You're aimin' for shore mostly. You ain't much stuck on salt water, be ye?" said Dave, scornfully and disconsolately. "What ye goin' to do with yer boat?"

"She's to be yours, Dave, to sell, cruise, traffic, or barter with as you like. The boat is to be yours."

"Will you put that down in black and white?"

"Here. Here's the little contract I've made out," said Tyrolese, drawing a paper from his pocket.

"Put that by!" said Dave. "I don't deal with no man that I have to have writin's with."

"All right then—I'll take your word, Dave. You are the only man I would deal with in that way, though."

Dave's blue eyes were fixed on that prospective trim, large, and seaworthy boat that was to take the

FLOOD-TIDE

place of the cranky *Old Bum*. His hard hands felt the gold flowing into his empty pockets. But he was proud of Alpy and her haughty ways; the man cowered before Alpena always, in huge, blind, dog-like fashion.

"What if Alpena can't grow to fancy ye? She despises ye wuss 'n snakes now."

"For Heaven's sake, Dave, can't you use simple common-sense? I tell you she will never voluntarily go to the length of marrying any man; but once married to a man of wealth and position she will be happier than she ever was before in her life, and you know it. She is a timid thing in some ways, for all her airs. She'd wrinkle up and dry away here on the bluffs with her everlasting sentiment, unless she's rescued. We take the decisive step, just for her good. Don't you care anything for the good of that beautiful girl, Dave Marlow?"

"I wish 't I didn't know 't you was the devil."

Tyrolese laughed leniently, "Oh, come, Dave!"

"A man punishes out a dreadful hour 't has any speeches along o' you," sighed Dave deeply, and walked out of the shed towards the bluffs. Dunbar followed him.

"Woe! woe! woe!" shouted the surf down on the ledges.

"She's sou'west," Dave remarked of the wind; "she sends it up here sometimes, by gosh, so 't it beats ag'in' them very windows! A man 'd die here o' clear, sheer lunsomeness."

"It's an infernal place," said Dunbar. "I must be getting home." He took a warm, fragrant cigar from his pocket and buttoned his great-coat with jaunty fingers.

Dave looked at him drearily. The bright luxury,

PLOTTING BY THE NARROWS

the warm comfort, and safe adventure controlled by that little golden hand!

"Ef you ever go back on your word, Tyrry Dunbar—ef you ever treat Alpena except as makin' of her and lookin' up to her, you little devil, I'll find ye, ef ye're in Egypt, and I'll throttle ye sure as my name's Marlow!"

"Right! Trust me for the bargain, and trust me for worshipping the girl. It is a bargain, Dave, and I know what that means with you. And mind, how you came by Alpena and whether you are her father or not is my secret, and I will down any man that ever raises a question. Good-night! Take some cigars; they are called rather a good flavor. Good-night, Dave."

Dave shambled around to the rear of the house, lifted the old door-latch and entered, his poor heart quaking. He recalled as from a buried dream the catastrophe in sight of shore years ago—the night, the indiscriminate floating wreckage, the child whom he had rescued and warmed to life against his heart. "A bumbly-bee ag'in' a bowlder," his mate of the *Old Bum* had said. He remembered the fine little dress, and the brief paper with the bank-notes secreted there; the frail raft to which the whole was lashed. The money he had doltishly appropriated without scruple and wasted long ago; the paper he had studied at first with ponderous interest—it was only a few sea-washed pencil-lines, a dimmed name and address.

Dave's brain was desperately sluggish, and his conscience a bed of the softest ease. He had meant to look the matter up, but he occupied himself first in buying that old foothold on the land which was his present domain with part of the money, leaving the little one there with a housekeeper, Mrs. Bratt.

FLOOD-TIDE

"Ye didn't know 't I had a wife over to Port, and she died and left me a little gal, did ye?" he had remarked, with winks and blushes and an air of general witticism, as he delivered up the child.

"We can believe anything bad of ye, Dave," was the flattering rejoinder, and the fact was accepted in good faith. The rest of the money burned in his pockets; he hastened to join his mate down in the boat; they sailed away on a memorable spree. The mate died on the spree, and his mouth was closed.

As Dave returned to his land shelter now and again, he looked to find the child there. He regarded the "find" as a talisman, and he feared at all events the penalty of procrastination. "She'd 'a' be'n lost ef it hadn't be'n for me. All was reported lost. So, why ain't she mine?" he concluded. She was the daintiest, handsomest child by Bar or Narrows: and as this fact developed itself more and more, Dave grew stouter in his swollen consciousness of fatherhood.

Tyrolese Dunbar had sent a blow at his gross, phlegmatic consciousness. "I allas knowed 't I should meet up with the devil some time," he groaned, took a lamp other than that already burning on the kitchen table, and, to Mrs. Bratt's amazement, entered the "keeping-room," closing the door behind him.

Here he sat down at a table, opened his inmost secret pocket, and brought out a yellow scrap of paper. He was unaccustomed to reading, preferring to imbibe the world's news orally and colored by the slang of his fellows. He had no spectacles, and the little lamp flickered wildly.

"It's faded out! Nothin' but a blank, by God!" said the perturbed lout, and, crumpling the paper in his hand, threw it through the open window.

PLOTTING BY THE NARROWS

Johnny Bowles, who, peeping from among a pile of rubbish, had been a patient and unseen listener during the colloquy in the woodshed, had followed like a full-blown moth the light in the parlor window, had observed Dave's cautious unfolding of the paper, and his expression of horror and dismay as he regarded it and threw it from him.

Johnny knew well the strange things that sailors carried about with them as powers either for good or evil, and he did not doubt that an evil spirit lay hid in this tiny bit of parchment. Spirits, good or evil, were convenient to have on hand. Johnny had already quite an assortment in his small treasure-box, and he took this one also to his keeping, gravely.

As for such of the woodshed discussion as he had stored in his memory, concerning Alpena's prospects, he considered that she was in great good luck, as usual, with unlimited sailing and confectionery rising like another sun on her horizon.

He concluded to keep the secret, for the present at least, with Dave and the princely Dunbar. "I wish 't *I* could have some luck," he sighed, trotting homeward with an evil spirit in his pocket.

XXIII

THE WARRIOR AND APOLLO



HE dull Harlan took life as an intense warfare, a Christian struggle for literal saintship, whereof the profession was already made. His face, as he sailed the summer sea or toiled by the shore, was the face, not of one waving a victorious sword over the slain, but of one who is himself torn for the conquest of self, who gains at the loss of self; the face, simply, of one who is giving up his young ambitions, his possessions, his heart's love, for the sake of some greater mastery, half understood as yet, but inalienable.

If this, too, should be a joyful struggle—yet I think the warrior knows; the man in the sweat of this hard battle does not sing; his strenuous labor is itself immortal; his peace a consummation beyond the bays of victory.

"When you and me agreed always to be chums, Arch, you know what our meanin' of it was then."

"Sure," said Arch, in his springing voice, lifting to the other the glad beam of his radiant eyes. "Chum means to stand by one another clean through the voyage; if chum fights, you fight; if chum gets drunk, you get drunk—though you and I never cared for besotment," he laughed.

"Yes, but it's meanin' more to me than that now."

THE WARRIOR AND APOLLO

"Hi?"

"That Langthorne woman has sort o' clung to ye lately. She's a desperate tired-lookin' creatur'. But ye make the han'somest couple goin'. Ye've been improvin' yerself right along, Arch. The' ain't no reason why ye shouldn't have a home here or som'ers and settle down."

"If she *would* marry me!"

"Do you mean to say that she lets you hang 'round her the way ye do, ef she won't marry ye?"

"Yes—she will marry me some time—she says," said Arch, slowly; "but—it's only natural—she wants me to be more according to what she calls her 'ideal' first."

"There ain't a han'somer man anywheres."

"More educated, more free from the faults I've got. She points out my faults to me when we're together"—Arch said this with a solemn exultation, as if he had confessed to a caress from her adored hand.

Harlan meditated. "She might help ye, herself, with the education. And faults? Of course. But there ain't a besotment nor a mean bone in yer whole body, Arch."

"*She* knows me!" said Arch, again exultantly; "she points out many a mean thing in me that I didn't know before."

"And she wants ye perfect before she'll have ye?"

"That's natural."

"Do ye want *her* perfect?"

"She is that now!"

Harlan smiled. "All right, Arch; make the best ye kin of yerself, and stand by her ag'in' the world. Now, I got somethin' to tell ye, and, bein' chums, you're bound to abide by my words as I would by

FLOOD-TIDE

yours. 'Tain't nothin' cowardly to do what I want ye to do. It's kind, for it's easier to give it than it is to take it, and I want ye to trust me that I wouldn't ask nothin' mean of ye. I'd sooner do a mean thing myself than ask it of ye, Arch."

"I'm trusting you, same as I always have."

"I want ye to take the fortin' I've saved up down to the Portland bank; it's quite a pretty bit now, with what Aunt Embree left me, and the house 'll sell well to summer folks ef ye don't want to live here. I've had offers for it. Ye've got a delicate lady-creatur' to care for. I've got the strength of an ox to work, and I'd keep on workin', anyways."

Arch had turned pale as he studied his friend. "Look here, Harl; Alpy is going to get tired of all this beating and tacking with one and another, and she will come back to you. Now, you keep up heart and be ready for her."

"She never wanted me—to marry me, and she never will. I ain't a-whinin', man! I'm steerin' all right. I be'n a-seein' things lately. I know my course and ye can't turn me. Jest help me along, chum, as ye allas have when the seas was up. Onct, I thought Alpy might need me, and I set myself, unbeknownst, to sort o' watch over her. Ef she ever doos need me, I'll be thar'! But the's a woman carin' for her now that's goin' to stand by her—that bookwritin' woman—and a woman can bide by a woman as a man can't that's no relation to her. Mis' Temple's took more 'n a fancy to that girl, and she's goin' to stand by her. I be'n a-seein' things lately. Now, I want ye to be generoust enough to settle down with the woman ye're a-worshippin' of, and make me happy, for ye're more to me, chum, than I got any words to tell of.

THE WARRIOR AND APOLLO

"Onct ye marry her," he continued, "ye'll be happy. Ye'll uphold her and slave for her and never see no fault in her, ye're sech a blame clean-sperrited cuss!" Harlan turned his face to his friend, with a whole-souled smile.

"And not be by the same shore, nor sail with you no more!" said Arch dazed.

"Look here, old man, be we seamen? I reckon so. Don't haggle and cling to things as ef the' wa'n't no others, until God hisself has to part yer cable and shove yer boat off. Livin' or dyin', when the call comes, say 'Aye,' and man the ropes! Dyin', too—I be'n a-thinkin' lately how we haggle and cling, not knowin' maybe how much better 'tis to go. I ain't losin' you, shipmate. We're for the same port."

"I don't want to be happy, chum, and you out of happiness."

"I'll be happy, ef ye'll do what I ask ye. Take care o' that delicate, disapp'inted woman-creatur'. Take her to live where she wants ter live; ye'll have enough. Tell her 't a friend has left it to ye, no more; and watch out to please and comfort her every way ye kin. Have ye be'n over to hear her criticise ye and lay the law down to ye to-day?"

"No," said Arch, expectant joy like a tender flame in his eyes.

"Go 'long, then," said Harl, "and tell her yer plans—and God bless ye for a chum 't trusts his chum."

Arch took the outstretched hand, still dazed and dreamily. He sailed over to the Reach. Margaret sat alone on the cottage piazza, in white. Arch could not express his admiration of her in white, the plain black hair, the sallow skin, the lines of

FLOOD-TIDE

suffering around the sad, dark eyes, her womanly self-possession. He came forward with the manner of an eager, questioning child. Did she think him good to-day? Did she wish to see him?

She smiled at his speechlessness. "Yes, come and sit here, my youngest. My head aches bitterly. Talk to me of impersonal things. Tell me how many herring you 'hauled' this morning. Has Captain Shale been to the spring for water yet and slopped the lane? Give me the Bar news."

"There are other places in the world than the Bar—beautiful places."

With this his lips closed. They sat, quiet, side by side. Margaret said to herself that the simple consciousness of his rude strength rested her.

She was the first to speak. "You never do what I tell you to do. You are selfish. Do you know that there is nothing that kills one's trust in another like selfishness?"

"I'll throttle it, then, Margaret."

"Who said that you might call me 'Margaret'?"

"You did."

"How you remember all the passing moods of life, you great baby. We must grow. How I could care for you if you were a strong, self-reliant man, one who understood me and who loved the truth better than himself, who would climb with me to the ideal."

"I've an ideal, too, Margaret. It is low, but it is the best I know. I have not had your training, I have not your mind. It is so low you could not fall from mine."

"What is it?"

"After all, it isn't for you; it's for me. I love you so that I could labor for you and be true to you to the world's end and beyond."

THE WARRIOR AND APOLLO

"I have been 'loved' until I am weary of it. You have not the first conception of what a great and impersonal love really is. Let us talk of something else. You are not to 'love' me, mind."

"Oh, all right!" said Arch, a mist coming over the splendor of his eyes. "I'll keep you from every harm that might touch you, Margaret. I'll guard you as a mother 't's strong guards a delicate child—but I won't love you. I'll live a pure life and endure for your sake; I'll stand by you ag'in' every word and wind o' the world—but I won't love you, Margaret. I'll have you in my heart, night and day; I'll put ye, dearest, next to my God, my livin' duty and joy. I'll live if you'll be kind to me, I'll bleed ter death, somehow, ef you turn from me—but I won't love you, Margaret."

"Oh, you dear boy! The Bar makes poets of you louts! What do you know about the world or defending me in it? You do not even know the world well enough to distrust it utterly, to begin with. You do not know that it is base, that it is a world one should rejoice to quit. We hope a little, trust a little, then comes a blow in the face; we fall and the head swims. Well, the boat is in a rapid current, and the ocean is never far. I will give you a smile for the whole story. The oars might as well drift—they cannot withstand the dark current, and God himself made our hands feeble. Hold them up—those profitless oars—broken, shattered, to Him! Here they are—what He gave us for *such* a voyage!"

Arch laid his cool brown hand over hers, that had itself something feverishly virile in its nervous force.

"I'm not trusting the world, Margaret. I'm not hating the world, but I'm not trusting it. I'm trusting God and just going through the world."

FLOOD-TIDE

"I forgot. You are a saint."

"Yes."

Margaret laughed; her manner could be infinitely caressing. Then her dark eyes were raised to him as if they read him through. "Shall I tell you how much—how very much—you have to do before you can be even a noble human being?"

"Yes."

She regarded him sadly; his eyes dwelt upon her with adoration and a child's unquestioning truth. Her criticism of him seemed mortal ecstasy. As she tore him mentally and spiritually, he was drunk with the rapture of such death at her hand; he smiled as she cut and thrust.

"I teach you nothing," she sighed, and her mouth grew bitter. "I teach no one anything. No one understands."

"Come and have a sail, Margaret."

"And exhaust what little vitality I have to-day. I thought you wished to be kind to me."

The big, cool hand again held hers shelteringly.

Out in the shed of the cottage, where several congregated captains sat at their pipes, a conversation was going on in which appeared this discursive dialogue:

"What's your soundin's on this Langthorne woman 't Arch is a-wastin' thin over?"

"Wal', I don' know as it's vary difficult to take the cut o' her jib. She's a fine, hifalutin brig, but her canvas hangs slack. It won't fly out fit for no viyage tell she goes to nussin' somebody asides Margaret Langthorne."

XXIV

THROWIN' WATER



UT the Bar was at peace. Even its winds and storms were only greater peace; for there now for me shone Infra's eyes, brave above all the surge of life.

I hauled my full nets, and she sang at her housework—our little cottage was my paradise. Arranging all for her welfare and safety, I yet put off any abrupt change in our manner of life, at least until her physical trial should be over.

Meanwhile, though at peace, we as a community stirred with the tides, we breezed with the winds, especially Dorna.

"I don' know what the world's comin' to," said she, "if we here at the Bar go to tinkerin' and experimentin' with the Sabbath-day the way we be'n a-doin' of lately. Here's the blueberry pickers all hailin' in here by six o'clock Monday mornin', with their pails full to overbrimmin'. When did they pick them berries?"

"Sunday, and you know it," said Dinsmore, in a matter-of-fact way. He had spent all his earthly fortune for a private invoice of those same berries, and as a result he sat by the kitchen stove on this bright day, his dove in one arm, a cup of ginger-tea at the other hand. His eyes were still wide from

FLOOD-TIDE

the throes and fear of death, and his mouth was a ghastly black.

"Dinsmore Gleeson, wait tell you git a little firmer holt on the land of the livin' before you begin your clack ag'in. Two quarts o' blueberries clear, without ary cream or sugar, is more 'n your tabernacle is goin' to put up with till you git to be a bigger size 'n you be now."

Dinsmore did not refute this statement. He resignedly stroked his dove and sipped the rasping tea with a countenance eager to absorb its healing fires.

"Last Sunday," continued Dorna, "a whole fleet of us went over to Fisher's Island and had a clam-bake. The' wa'n't no excuse that we was under a topic, for things has got so we ain't none of us been under a topic for a long time.

"Sunday afore that we was settin' around on our turned-over pails out in my gardin, catin' raw pease and string-beans—they're deliciouser than they be cooked, I know, but it does seem as though we'd ought to draw the line, and not tickle our carnal appetites with uncooked vittles Sunday. Of course, we can all say that we started to the spring to get water, but we well knew 't our chief end and aim was to dilly-dally away there together, tellin' stories and crackin' jokes, and devourin' the fruits o' the 'arth afore they'd been sanctified by ary drop o' water, hot or cold."

A group of conscience-smitten listeners remained silent, but Dinsmore felt the force of returning strength.

"Why don't ye be an advent, then?"

Dorna, in spite of her severity, was glad to see her son taking hold once more of the sinews of this mortal existence.

THROWIN' WATER

"Saints and advents has be'n all alike," she admitted, sadly. "Look back to Bible times; see what a little fall o' Moses done, and he was hove out o' the way. What can *we* expect?"

"The question is," said Elder Fyrando, in a tone of great spiritual alarm and quickening, "whether we'd better try to run a meetin' here, or sail over to Beel Island and have a conference?"

Dinsmore leaped from his chair. "Say, ma, get 'em to go over and have a conference! Let's! Do, ma!"

"You set yourself down and consider what kind of a conference you'd 'a' be'n to by this time ef them blueberries had done the work they set out to do! Havin' a conference is a great piece o' work," she added, impressively. "Last time we was over to Beel Island we stayed a week and run sheer out o' vittles, 'ceptin 'sounds and tongues' chowder, but nary a conversion. A nor'east storm come up, and 'twas all we could do to keep the tents over our heads.

"To be sure the's a meetin'-house over there, built when the squall of savin' grace struck that island long ago. Sech sweet singin' as was heard there then some of us 'll never forget; but that set's all gone, and the's nothin' but gulls to testify there now, and nothin' but the wind to ring the bell."

We shivered.

"But ef this experimentin' with the Lord's day keeps on, we shall have to fit out and sail over for a conference."

Dinny bounced, although he did not leave his chair. "Say! I hope some of ye'll keep on experimentin'!"

"Dinsmore Gleeson," said Dorna, "you've gone

FLOOD-TIDE

too fur! Bound or colicky, well or dyin', you're goin' to git a lickin'."

She took a stick from behind the door (previously treated by Dinny, although retaining its original shape) and disappeared with him into the bedroom. No wail, no voice of protestation issued therefrom.

"I don't lick ye, son, because I'm mad," said Dorna, emerging rather breathless, with a stack of pithless birch timber in her hand. "I lick ye for your good."

"Ye allas dip yer rails and beat around as ef ye was mad," said Dinny, with a leer.

Captain Abram Shale, with his boy's hat and his aspect of omnipotence, stood leaning against the door-jamb. "What's the matter with ye all?" he said, in his great, soothing voice. "Don't ye be afeard. Ye ain't hurtin' Sunday none. Ef one on us is in trouble, the rest is all a-nussin' and totin' kindness over. Ef a stranger comes amongst us, the' ain't no questions asked, but he's well treated. God A'mighty jest as soon ye be gleeful Sunday as ary day."

We admired Captain Shale, somehow; we wondered at him. We did not know quite how far to go. Dorna alone could speak. She revered the old man, though his sweet soul might be in peril.

"Uncle A^{berm}," she said, so gently and solemnly that it gave impressiveness to what might otherwise have seemed entirely lacking in relevance, "be you a descendant from Jerusalem?"

"I don' know," replied the great man, who had done his thinking in company with the vastness of a sea his faded eyes could not measure—"I don' know, but the' ain't no meetin'-house on 'arth 't stands to me anyways for my religion, 'n' I couldn't,

THROWIN' WATER

in God's name, put on a suit o' pucker-struck clo's 'n' go into church 'n' squat there prayin' whilst one human bein' was waitin' in onredeemed sorer outside 't I could lift the hand to help or speak the voice o' comfort to."

Even Dorna was palely silent, and Captain Shale let out another reef to the mighty winds.

"I confess," he said, "I even had my doubts about perlessin' religion. Ye don't perless to breathe, do ye? Ef yer soul's full o' God, what else ye go'n' to do but perless Him? Ye show it, 'thout no words. Ef it ain't, ye may stand up in pucker-struck raiment and say this or that, but ye ain't deceivin' nobody."

Captain Shale, like Dinsmore, had gone too far. The old mariner was fearless of a sea where we were still throwing the plummet-line. His eyes dreamed, and no one openly rebuked him, although his faithful wife, Aunt Sylphy, was among the listeners. She did say, however, with general significance:

"Perhaps we'd better sing 'Unsaved.'"

Dorna went promptly to the organ.

"'Unsaved! Unsaved!'" the wail arose and lingered plaintively. Captain Shale's eyes dreamed: but at a repetition of the fourth verse he smiled. "Ef you're a-thringin' that in my face," he said, "I may as well own up 't I'm kinder sick of it. Ef I'm onsaved," he continued, in the same gentle, philosophical manner, "why, I ain't makin' no clack about it myself, and I don't see why anybody else need set up their fog-horn."

The musical programme languished somewhat after this. Aunt Nag, who was inveterate, suggested from her corner that we render "They cried for the rocks and the mountings," but the motion fell

FLOOD-TIDE

flat, and those indurate objects were allowed to remain in peace.

"Wal', I must be pursuin' my industries," said Captain Shale, picking up his pail and starting for the spring. "Now, I want to tell ye, jest in a frien'ly way, don't be afeared to keep kinder chirked up, ef 'tis Sunday to-day. Ef ye was in some pucker-struck community where it was made a rowtine of, ye might have some cause for complaint; but God's winds and air is jest as free to ye here for pure thinkin' and kin'ly livin' as they is ary day in the week; and ef ye want ter be gleeful, why, for crab's sakes, be gleeful. Here's hopin'!"

It seemed too good to be true, but something regal in the old mariner's bearing had left an impression. We waited until the more sedate members of the group had departed.

Then—it happened in the most artless way—Brother Fyryards, who was sitting near the water pail, slyly flipped a few drops into Elder Fyrando's face. Elder Fyrando laughed boyishly and returned the compliment with a splash somewhat weightier. Beautiful Grandma Gleeson, whose brimming pail was at her side, entered girlishly as of old into this Bar pastime, and I felt, from her hand, a stream of pure spring water trickling down my nose. At the same time the "bookwriter's" placid brow was immersed from some source; her ripple of laughter mingled with the others. Dinsmore sprang from his chair with a yell of joy. The coon-cats darted in one meteoric string out-of-doors. Johnny Bowles entered. Dinny's alarmed dove took refuge among the barley-muffins in the centre of the deserted breakfast-table.

It was the game of "throwing water," and only

THROWIN' WATER

those who have indulged in it know its alarming pitch of excitement, its hilarious ecstasy. The rules of the game naturally admitted the throwing of the fluid only in limited quantities, as by filtered drops or fistfuls. So, when Dinsmore crept up behind his mother with the quart dipper evenly full, and lavished its contents at one swoop down the back of her neck, we all felt that now indeed, at last, things had gone too far.

The water pursued its course down Dorna's noble frame and lay in a flood at her feet. She gasped and her teeth chattered. Dinny, gone wild at the height of the frolic, quailed now that he saw his work; his face was whiter, his wide-open mouth was blacker than at any stage of his blueberry illness. "Little son," cried Dorna, impetuously, "be you struck with death ag'in?"

He nodded.

She folded him in her arms. "Steep some ginger, quick!" she cried; "we both of us need a dost." She rocked her large, ungainly infant tenderly, while we, so late full of revelry, now bent with solemn faces over the stove.

"I never was so fond of the disportment o' 'throwin' water' as some," she declared, applying the reviving cup to her son's lips and her own. "Some is fonder of it than they be of any other livin' game, but it needs years and wisdom to it; otherwise how be we goin' to tell what's comin'?"

This question seemed already to have been so plainly answered by untoward events that we were silent.

Two of the water-throwers had run outside—Alpena laughing, Norman Saxe with his golden beard almost as plentifully sprinkled as Dorna had been.

FLOOD-TIDE

He caught the witch among the spruce-trees, but she was intangible; her dainty, dark head reared itself with sudden dignity; her eyes took on their deepest gloom—he even saw a tear standing in them, and his heart cried:

“Oh, my poor love! Dearest! Sweet one!”

Like a weird spirit, for all her beauty, she kept him at bay.

“You are untrue,” she pouted. “You were untrue to Margaret. Arch used to love me. He is untrue. You are all untrue.”

“I am not God—no!” he exclaimed. “Who is? Neither you nor Margaret will venture anything. You must find perfection. If you have some fancy or conception of what is true, why don’t you show it towards *some* human being and help things along? But you shut yourselves up. You won’t *live*—by Heaven, you won’t *live*!”

“Margaret Langthorne is right, I think. You are all selfish. You want us to give ourselves to you. You are all untrue.”

“You are her fitting pupil.”

She covered her eyes with her hands; the tears came through. “Oh, I could have loved you so, had you been worthy!”

He ground his teeth, he clenched his fists, he groaned. “Come. It is a selfish world. I am selfish. I loved Margaret, but I found she had no real heart for me, before I ever saw you. She kept me, from mere vanity. I’ve a big heart at your service, the devotion of a man and a gentleman. My family are true husbands, faithful, self-sacrificing even. Alpy! Alpy! Dearest!”

She shook her head. “No one is true.”

“Why won’t you begin truth somewhere, then?”

THROWIN' WATER

You've said you loved me. Why won't you start on that and be true to your word, so 'truth' will have a start in the world somewhere? You seem to know just what it is. I do not, unless it is letting your heart out to people and making some earthly struggle. I've been fooled a thousand times, but I'll go on living and believing to the end, so help me God!"

"Leave me," she said. "You have broken my heart."

He laughed strangely; then he turned to her with a divine look of yearning in his face; great tears came to his eyes; he stretched his hands to her.

"I'm full of faults, I know. Help me! Help me to live!"

"I am not strong enough. I need strength to lean upon."

He turned away half tottering, like one wounded. She came back to the house and laid her sweet Madonna face against the "bookwriter's" arm. "My suffering little lamb," Mrs. Temple said, "does your head ache?" Alpena nodded and pressed her forehead closer, like a child—as were most of us, half-formed, half-seeing children.

Except my Infra, who had taken me, cast off by another, reckless in all my desires, feeble in all my faith. As I entered our cottage she looked up with a smile and regarded my besprinkled raiment sagely.

"You people at Dorna's have been throwing water!"

I nodded. "You sent me there, into mischief."

"Little boys need play," she answered. In spite of the love and joy on her face, she could do without me! without the world! Faith was all. Loyalty—not what she received of them, but what she gave.

FLOOD-TIDE

There lay *her* mission, impregnable; joyful because the intrinsic regality of her love would admit no doubt, and that which wandered from her heart would in God's good time return to its yearning.

"I would go through hell to be like you," Margaret had said to her in some towering impulse.

The same thought came to me now. I crept up to her in the old, appealing way, morally weak, daunted of the world.

She laid her hand on my forehead.

"Sing, *Infra*. Sing 'I have suffered.' "

" 'Bleeding heart, we'll go together,
I with thee through mortal day.
Suffer well, for I have suffered—
Suffered, suffered, all the way.' "

But her voice was peace.

XXV

THE CRUISE TO THE FAIR



YOU'RE a city man yourself and ain't afraid o' goin' up country to the shire-town fair, I guess?" Dorna said to me.

"Well, I try not to be afraid of anything, Cousin Dorna."

"And you make it out, too. The' ain't a bustiner man 'long shore 'n you're gittin' to be. Infra says she'll be glad to have ye go. We was both sayin' ye're innercent as a three-year-old baby for bein' tickled with any 'arthly entertainment."

I laughed—for it was true.

Dorna suddenly became serious.

"It's got so that we here at the Bar don't mingle with up-country folks. They call us yohos, and we call them punkins. We don't like to go anywheres where we can't go in a boat. Now we all know the ocean was ordained o' God; but He's allowed the highways o' the dry land ter exist, and I don't think we'd ought to spurn our heels at 'em entirely."

I was still pondering this moral obligation when Dorna continued:

"They're tryin' to make the best they can of themselves up country. It's said they got a punkin on show 't weighs a hunderd and fifty pounds, and fetchin' their cattle and enlargements and turkeys and all sech as they can to make a show of, and I

FLOOD-TIDE

think we ought to take sech as we can carry o' the most interestin'est things we got and lend our countenance on to 'em for all we're worth."

The undertaking seemed to me stupendous—in fact, appalling. However, I had never yet refused any righteous summons from a lady; and Dorna's noble purpose was not only to patronize the neglected highways, but to unite the too-sensitive and retiring Bar with the stirring throes of inland existence, to recognize the æsthetic spirit of their enterprise by making to it some glittering contributions of our own.

"I don' know as anybody's noticed what I've been a-doin' of," she went on; "but I've been grainin' up Pa Gleeson's old mare for three days now, and pa's been to work on the express."

Noticed it! It had been the wonder of the Bar. "Mene, Mene, Tekel"—the old bibliologist's name for his equine possession, familiarly corrupted into "Minny"—had disappeared from her breezy pastures and had been observed gazing in contented fatness from the small window of her stall of incarceration. The express, which had long served us as a dumping-place for any superfluous object, as well as a flake for drying chance specimens of fish, had been relieved of its stores, pulled out of the ditch, and now shone on the crest of Grandpa Gleeson's demesne, hubbed, tired, enshafted, and brash with a coat of green paint.

"Well, well," I said, with a sort of hopeless encouragement, and then drew a long breath. "Well, well."

From that hour I walked with some bewilderment among my fellow-men, as one expecting summons to a strange country. But when the blow came it

THE CRUISE TO THE FAIR

was a simple matter—as is every blow after it has descended. Nothing could have exceeded the matter-of-fact calm, the conscientious method of our embarkation. We were loud but unflurried.

“Put them crate of ducks in to leward of the pig’s crate,” said Dorna. “Dinny’s little dove-box can stand ’longside the organ-stool, where he’s goin’ to set to drive; the coon-cat’s cage I’ll have ’longside o’ me, and Captain Alfred ’ll take care of Zeke’s enlargement.”

The express lacked the trifling accommodation of seats. Dinny, as has been said, sat on the parlor organ-stool. Dorna’s comfort we emphasized—for the trip to Harrison was long—by the substantial security of a deserted hen-coop as a basis, with a bag of meal laid over it as a cushion. I was left to find support and change of scene among the crates, honored ever by the sacred charge of Ezekiel’s portrait. Grandpa Gleeson had intimated some willingness—not ardent, but faint, like all the earthly desires of age—to be our Jehu. Dorna had felt, and justly, that the undertaking would be too exhaustive for his failing years. Besides, though morally stern with Dinsmore, her whole being lent itself to his indulgence.

Perched on the organ-stool, with the reins in his hands, Dinsmore was many times a man and an ancient.

“I wish ’t I had your ambition, grappy,” he remarked to the old man, who was patiently wielding his scythe in the door-yard; “but seamen is lazy, ye know.”

“Steer keerful, little son. She’s a peaceable old critter, but she may dip her rails and end over. The wheat shall be stored into barns, but the tares shall be gathered into bundles and burned—dum

FLOOD-TIDE

'em !" he ended, somewhat testily, regarding an apron-string, a piece of ship's tackle, and a defunct egg-beater that had attached themselves simultaneously to the point of his scythe.

"It's the dark o' the moon," said Dorna, from her firm plant in the middle of the meal-bag, "and this cruise has got to be executed of by daylight." The sun was gloriously rising as she spoke. "Why don't you take up your moorin's, Dinsmore Gleeson, and start?"

At this, Minny, to her own unutterable marvel, was awakened into action; the express, too, creaked and groaned in dismay at its own advancement; the pig set up a sharper remonstrance, the ducks quacked deafeningly, the dove moaned, the cat hissed, and thus through the sleeping hamlet we crawled vociferously on to the dark entrance of the woods and unknown adventures.

"Dinsmore Gleeson," said Dorna, in a voice clear above all the tumult, "I want you to understand that this is a cruise we've got to be mindful of. I'm not afeared o' Minny's bein' skeered at anything. Afore she was laid by, she'd had experience. She knew that there was every kind o' thing goin' on in this world, and she wouldn't so much as lift her head to see whether it was this or that. But the way is narrer and full o' perils. Do you keep a sharp lookout from that there pilot-house, where your tabernacle sets there on the organ-stool, and at the first glimpst of anything a-comin' do you sheer out into some nook or cranny, side o' the road, and wait there till they've safe passed."

We meandered noisily on for an hour or more before Dinsmore found it necessary to put these injunctions in force.

THE CRUISE TO THE FAIR

Then suddenly Dorna and I realized that our complete establishment was safely stranded in a ditch, with intervening shrubbery blotting out the highway. We were absolutely hidden. At the abrupt surcease of motion, the pig and the ducks yielded to an astonished silence. We now plainly heard an approaching vehicle. As it rolled unsuspectingly alongside of us, our live-stock suddenly burst into a spasm of renewed clamor; we heard a frightened horse leap and dash impetuously down the road, although the last tones of the driver that were borne back to us, while absolving us from further existence as unfit to inhabit the earth, seemed to indicate that he himself still lived and was bringing his frenzied beast under control.

Plainly our plan of progress had its defects, and as we emerged into the highway Dorna amended it.

“Dinsmore, don’t ever lay to ag’in that way sheer out o’ sight o’ what’s a-comin’: sech an aspect as we be with all this squealin’ and cacklin’ aboard had better be took face to and let the worst be known. Hereafter, first glimpst you git of anything, do you jest stop in your own tracks, right where you be, plain forestandin’, and let them make their own calkulations as to what they’ll do about it. Childern has privileges, and sech a little grasshopper as you be settin’ up there had ought to be took into account.”

Dinsmore had turned pale in the ditch, and his organ-stool had already thrice upset by reason of the rough mutations of the journey; his countenance expressed strict adherence to any godly advice that might reach him. Accordingly, in due time, we came to a full stop confronting a man on a load of potatoes; his face was cynical, but not of an ungenial aspect.

FLOOD-TIDE

"Wal'," said he, after some time, "all you folks got to do to git home is to turn around!"

We ignored this irony and continued to face him unflinchingly.

"Why don't ye sheer out and let me pass?" he finally essayed to question us. "What ye waitin' for?"

"Oh," said Dorna, who was equal to anybody on the road, be he yoho or punkin, "we're only jest waitin' for the frost to sweeten the choke-plums!"

Thus vanquished in insolence, the man beamed upon us broadly, good-naturedly dismounted, drew his own equipage to one side and led ours safely past.

"I hope ye'll reach Harrison safe," he said, in parting, "and I ventur' to say 't there won't be no more of an aspect to the whole fair 'n what you be."

As we were designedly going to form part of a show, this could not be construed as otherwise than flattering.

The next time that Dinsmore drew to a full and determined stop was on the main street of a considerable village; on this occasion we faced a smart buggy in which sat a man of clerical appearance. He acknowledged our sudden pause before him by drawing his own horse to a standstill and gazing at us with a look of pleasant inquiry.

Dorna coughed to Dinsmore to move along, but his back was towards her—he did not understand; he was deeply interested in the products of the confectioner's window near by, and Minny, leaning slightly over to one shaft, had composed herself in an attitude of sleep.

"It is a fine day," said the arrested occupant of the buggy, encouragingly.

THE CRUISE TO THE FAIR

We blushed and tried to pierce Dinsmore's stolid back with some intimation of our eager desire to move forward, but nothing could have seemed more permanently fixed than our situation.

"Can I do anything for you?" said the sleek individual, finally.

"I can do something for myself!" cried Dorna, "and I'm goin' to! Dinsmore Gleeson, if I ever! You little contraption of the Dust of Adam's Leavin's, what are you a-stoppin' here for?"

"You told me to!" said Dinsmore, when we reached again the welcome solitude of woods and wilderness.

"Smartness, all alone by itself, 'll never take you anywheres, Dinsmore, without reason and jedgment is tacked on to it. Is that—is that old Dr. Stimson, drivin' to'ds us from away off there down Bear Hill? It is, as I ever!" concluded Dorna, both with gratitude and elation. "Now, Dinsmore, that there bad back tooth o' yourn is a-goin' to be hauled."

Dinny sought no longer to conceal the weariness and despair which consumed his soul; his arms hung limp, his form drooped.

"I knew 't I shouldn't have a good time!" he said. "I ain't never had a good time yet goin' anywheres. I'm a sailin' captain, anyway—that's what I am. I ain't no captain o' sech—sech a old dry-land scow as this."

"He brought you into this very world," continued Dorna, with animation, as the doctor drew nearer.

"I wish 't I had my little shotgun here. I'd pay him for it!" sneered Dinsmore, bitterly, then realized deeply that he had gone too far, and thereafter submitted himself to events with the stiffness of a hero. After a pleasant interchange of reminiscences between Dorna and the doctor, Dinsmore was seated

FLOOD-TIDE

on a convenient stump by the wayside and his tooth was drawn.

"The's one thing I ain't goin' to do," he assured his mother firmly, from a gory mouth—"I ain't goin' to set on that organ-stool no longer. She's as unsteady as an old jibboom in a hurricane. I've been hove off her six times a'ready. I'm goin' to set easy the rest o' the way," and he climbed out on to Minny's back, and, selecting a camping-ground near her neck, sank luxuriously astride her with a sigh of comfort.

Dorna's hen-coop and meal-bag were moved forward, and she grasped the reins. Dinsmore held to them for support, while she wielded them as the rudder of guidance, and between the two, Minny, vague as to a bourn hitherto, became more than ever indeterminate or erratic of action.

"Dinsmore, do you stop bastin' her up hill."

"I ain't bastin' her. I ain't got no gad to baste her with."

"You're a-pinchin' her ears, then."

"I be not."

"Then why is she a-takin' up so? The whole way from the Bar she ain't once scrabbled as she's a-scrabblin' now."

"She wants to git there some time or other, I s'pose. We sha'n't have nothin' to eat nor no peace till we do."

"Wal', when we git to the top o' this hill, do you let her flop."

"I sh'd think you'd want her to take up now, ma. I c'n see the tents down to Harrison, 'nd the stalls!"

For noise, we were beyond competition; in speed we had as yet made no adventure, nor did we essay any until nearing the very entrance to the fairgrounds, when Dorna, having no whip, took the su-

THE CRUISE TO THE FAIR

perfluous length of the reins in hand as a substitute ; but in wielding them, as a cowboy swings his lasso, the loop caught her own shoe, which sat very loosely on her foot, and that article was thrown violently against the hat of a chance pedestrian—a young man of “summer” rather than native appearance, bland, well-groomed, and with a twinkling, inscrutable eye.

He stooped and lifted the shoe, and handed it to Dorna, with a low sweep of his hat.

“Madam,” he said, “I have heard of ladies throwing down their glove as an incentive to knightly ambition. Permit me to return to you your shoe.”

Dorna was a handsome woman, and now, as she blushed indulgently from her stanchion on the meal-bag, she was handsomer than ever.

“I hope you wa’n’t stunted,” she said.

“Surprised, madam—not rendered unconscious, no.”

“I wear my old ones for comfort,” continued Dorna. “I got a pair o’ peakéd-toed ones at home—”

“You never do nothin’ with those ‘ceptin’ to hide your purse in ’em when you go cruisin’,” interrupted Dinsmore, his small, wiry legs enwreathing Minny’s neck.

“Did I ever see sech a half-bake!” exclaimed Dorna ; “to come over here to Harrison to tell the whole fair where we down to the Bar hides our purses when we has need.”

As the conversation waxed louder between mother and son—for Dinsmore never took pains to show off much except before a considerable crowd—we realized that there was no centre of interest on the grounds so well patronized as that where we had ourselves paused : we were completely surrounded by open

FLOOD-TIDE

mouths, grinning mouths, and in fact by the ribaldry of saucy mouths.

"Say, here's some yohos! hoo! hoo! hoo!"

"It's be'n a long time," said Dorna, calmly, "sence I feasted my eyes on so many green punkins, which never fear but God 'll ripen ye ef ye keep still und'neath His redeemin' hand and give Him the chance."

It was noticeable that no personal attack was hereafter made upon Dorna, though her establishment was both particularly and freely criticised.

"Say, heave off yer herrin' and we'll take a cruise with ye."

"My herrin'," replied Dorna, "is the fattest pig and ducks, and the purtiest dove, and the smartest coon-cat, and a two-by-four-foot enlargement of a better man 'n ever set foot in Harrison afore!"

"Say, Noah's blacksmith was a pretty good hand at shoein' a hoss, wa'n't he? They've wore well, considerin'."

"Ef you value sech brains as you got," continued our leader, "don't get too near her hind-legs; she's kind o' fiery in 'em."

"Say, boys," said a rowdy, giving a nautical squint, "when 'll the tide serve for clammin'? Looks kind o' as though a fog was go'n' to shet down, eh?"

"It has shet down on some intellecks," pursued Dorna, with undeviating calm, "in sech a way as it won't lift for nothin' but the jedgment trump."

"Hi! Look at that cuss in the art gallery!" All eyes turned to me, faithfully supporting Zeke's enlargement; and it was at this moment, and as Dinsmore, breathing wrath, and Minny, deep in sleep, were being pelted with peanut shells, that a

THE CRUISE TO THE FAIR

gust of humanity, in the form of Bayruck, our "wicked man," came to our deliverance.

His tongue rolled, his mighty arms swung, and a clear and respectful path opened before us. In his wake came poor, happy Earle with some bits of merchandise, the disconsolate "wreck," and Johnny Bowles.

"Ye stood by me, Fourth o' July," said Bayruck, slapping me heartily on the back, "and ye gave these unfort'nits, 't nobody else wanted, a good time; so I fetched 'em over to-day, and I come first and chief to stand by you, mate."

"If you get drunk to-day, Bayruck," I said in his ear, "you'll be a selfish slouch."

He had a marvellously fine eye, and it looked faith into mine.

"Forwards to the salt-water-deestricht tent!" he shouted. "Each deestricht has its show tent; standard admission, ten cents. The's nobody else here from the salt-water deestricht," he explained, "so the salt-water tent is ourn."

We were led thither by his firm and buoyant hand, where we found refreshments waiting us, and our "exhibits" were brought in from the express. Minny was tethered by a well of oats outside. Dorna had recognized female relationships among the pumpkin throng, and had gone out frankly to fraternize therewith. Dinsmore and Johnny Bowles were at large. Bayruck, as a mark of honor and confidence, had stationed me at the door with a coffee-cup for the entrance receipts, and he himself took a post outside.

"Ho, all ye weary, sunstruck landlubbers!" he called aloud, "come to the salt-water tent. It's the only place on the grounds where the wind's breezin'! Come in and see the learned pig! He's been a long

FLOOD-TIDE

journey and he's sound asleep, but the wisdom is jest as plain on his featur's as ef he was doin' sums in 'rethmetic!

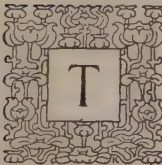
"Come in and see the dove 't's a direct descendant o' the one Noer hove out o' the ark to beat around and find a rest for the flat of her foot!

"Come and see the life-size pictur' by a cousin of Michael Raffero!

"Come in and hear the tale of the famous wrack off Dianny Ledges. Yes, the very wrack himsel' sets within here ready to tell the tale. We won't have no nudgin' and laughin' over *his* misfortin.' Wracks! wracks! wracks!" cried Bayruck, clearly—"what be we all but wracks? Come in with a tear in yer eye and a civil tongue in yer heads. If wrack-age wa'n't the very material God A'mighty took to build on, what chance 'd there be for you and me? Old 'postle Peter's timbers went all to pieces with lyin' and cussin' and foolin' along shore; but look at what a staunch old craft God hammered him into, 't set her prow for a straight viyage at last, 'nd took every sea breast fo'most, ploughin' a clean track right through death, hell, and the grave."

XXVI

EVERYWHERE SELL AN EVIL SPIRIT

 WICE had I emptied the silvery contents of the coffee-cup into the "wreck's" pockets; and still Bayruck shouted at the door. Dissipated acquaintances sought to lure him away; he lured them inside the tent instead; he lured the silver from their pockets; he touched not a nickel himself—these exertions were for the "wreck."

Moreover, he kept it a solemn spectacle throughout.

"It's Bayruck—wickedest old tar-jacket on the Bar," some one said in passing; "he's drunk as a fool. He's always drunk."

There was not yet one thread of gray in Bayruck's black hair; his hands and heart were steady with the mastery over a selfish desire: his brilliant, near-sighted eyes glared through his glasses as he heard these words; then they softened with a deep shadow.

"As you pass along in take a look at old Bayruck—that's me! Wickedest old tar-jacket along shore," he continued clearly. "Used to get drunk pretty much whenever he got the chance; but he hain't touched a drop to-day. Why? Because he wants to help another 'wrack' along, and he ain't goin' to touch another drop o' liquor till this poor 'wrack' in-

FLOOD-TIDE

side here gits fitted out with another boat, not ef it takes twelve months—not ef it takes till doomsday.”

It spread that we were a revival meeting, and Dorna appeared among us again both in beauty and glory.

“I wouldn’t say nothin’ about bein’ wicked ef I had your brains, Bayruck!” she exclaimed, enthusiastically. “I came as I supposed jest to help along a show; ’stead o’ that it’s all goin’ to help the ‘wreck’ get another boat! When things take sech a tack as that, somebody’s brains is to the bottom of it; and while I know there’s better things to have ’n brains, yet I never did believe in spurnin’ my heels at ’em the way some do.”

The “wreck’s” eyes were alight with a new hope. At such oft-repeated expressions of sympathy from the throng his high, crazed laugh had taken on a saner tone.

“Forty years I stood my own pilot through thick and thin, and was never turned ashore from no vessel afore in my life. She jumped over two ledges and pounded herself to pieces on the third—”

“Hi! it must er been terrible,” said an earnest voice.

“Poor man!” said a pretty girl.

“She was an able boat, but the wind was blowin’ so as to show the mud to the bottom o’ the ocean! Ye couldn’t stand on her no more ’n ye could on a halibut’s back—”

“She may well be called the learned pig,” came Dorna’s voice, expatiating from another part of the tent. “The’s a button on the door o’ her pen to home, ’t she can turn jest as well as I can; and when she wants to go out for a cruise she don’t have to wait for no aid but what her own snout can give her.”

EVERYWHERE SELL AN EVIL SPIRIT

"She *is* a smart one," said the delighted audience.

"Her mother afore her was an old-headed creetur'. The' was an old porch where we used to keep our apples and sech, and set things out to cool. A man come to see father about some cattle, and after he was gone we made a bramblin' out there to see what the pig was a-doin' of. She was a-carryin' off the pudding, end up. She'd set it down and eat till we was near up to her, then she'd pick it up and start. She never grew big, but kept jest that size that made her handy at all kind o' sech works as she wanted to be a-doin' of. She discovered 't the way we knew she was stealin' somethin' was because she made a noise. After that, she done everything still. She'd come in there and eat herself full and then make a great overturn o' somethin' afore she cut out, jest to aggravate us."

"Perfectly wonderful!" said a respectful voice. Bayruck attended to that. There was no hint of cynicism or derision anywhere.

"Why is the coon-cat called the Chaldean coon?" continued the speaker.

"Who tacked that name on to her?"

"Captain Bayruck."

"I sh'd think anybody could see 't she's from Chaldee!" exclaimed Dorna, blushing virtuously, but determined by all means to uphold Bayruck and to foster the interests of the "wreck."

"Why are the ducks called the Israelitish ducks?" said the same grave and attentive inquirer.

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen!" declared Dorna—just to give herself time to think. "Hain't you ever heered o' the scatterin'-out and the prophetship?" she demanded loudly. "And the skinned anamile 't was put in Adam's place?"

FLOOD-TIDE

There was silent acquiescence, and for all practical purposes the Israelitish origin of the ducks was soundly accounted for.

"How quiet they all seem!" said the respectful observer, "pig and all."

"They wore their windpipes out a-comin'," explained Dorna; "their stillness ain't for no lack o' wisdom. I warrant anything they're a-chargin' their minds with the things they'll be a-doin' of soon as they git back home and git the chance."

"It was young flood-tide," moaned the "wreck." "She'd strike them seas and squash down jest like an old eatin'-tray and we was the vittles! Blue water all over us. I was a proud boy when I begun to earn twenty dollars a month, but I aimed for forty; by-and-by I got forty, and then I aimed for a hunderd. I was makin' a hunderd dollars a month, and now my vessel's lost!"

"Ho, all ye weary, sunstruck landlubbers, here's the only tent where the wind's breezin'!" cried the voice of Bayruck.

A heavy barouche, with its high-headed horses and shining harness, rolled up to our tent door. Margaret Langthorne reclined against the cushions, and her patrician face looked admirably at home there. Her contempt for the situation, quite including Tyrolese Dunbar at her side, was evident. She was amusing herself. Though critical of others, her own moral conduct was beyond comment: she had always some high reason unknown to the normal sense.

"For Tyrolese," I thought with a sudden haunting uneasiness, "has some design upon Alpena, and this détour in his attentions is a ruse. As for Arch, if he hears of Margaret with Dunbar to-day there'll be straightforward trouble."

EVERYWHERE SELL AN EVIL SPIRIT

When Margaret saw me at the door holding the coffee-cup, that large gleam of mirth that sometimes made her eyes so beautiful swept over them transiently. Tyrolese assisted her to alight, but did not accompany her into the tent, nonchalantly avoiding and despising both Bayruck and me.

Margaret dropped a coin into the cup and took a glance about. "Why do you do such things, Alfred?" she said low, at my side.

"I do not plan them. I seem to fall heir to them by rights."

"You are weak," she murmured.

"On the contrary, I am six feet in height, with the health to cudgel any man on the grounds."

"Oh, you are a weak child."

"Is your wisdom doing well by you, Margaret?"

"At least, I do not dream. I scrutinize life, and though I suffer I keep my mental and moral perceptions clear."

"I am not acting immorally."

"You are acting like a fool. That is as bad."

"I deny it," I said, with a smothered laugh. "I am holding a coffee-cup to receive coins to begin the 'wreck' a new boat."

"You might give him a boat if you liked."

"Ah," I said, wearily; "but I think he would not like it as well. Dorna would not—they would none of them. People like to have you toil and live among them—not drop things on them from a height."

"Do you do what people like to have you do? You are on a par with Earle. Look!"

The "fool," in his loud-checked suit, very importantly and with much sputtering, was counting out a paper of pins by tens, a wag having declared that

FLOOD-TIDE

his purchase was short by two. As usual on public occasions, Earle had a spool of thread running at his coat-tails.

"Say!" said Bayruck, glancing in with the sharp lightning of his eyes, "do you gawks 't stand grinning there, thinkin' yerselves so smart, ever want to git to heaven? Then you got to change yer tack. It's the kingdom o' childern and fools. Why? Because they run an errand for ye swift as their feet can go and they suspect no evil. Earle thinks ye're in earnest. *He's* in earnest. He'd walk his legs off for ary one o' ye, and he trusts ye all. Be careful how ye act with the king's son in there! He's a little befuddled here in this world with sech a smart set o' knaves as we be, but his brain 'll clear up ag'in all right when he gits to God's own country!"

"What an eye that man has! He might have been something," said Margaret, regarding him. "You have a champion, you see!" She smiled haughtily as she gathered up her skirts to go out.

"Earle and I. Yes, it seems we have a champion." I lifted my hat.

She looked at me an instant steadily and curiously.

"At least, you are at peace," she sighed. "Should I be so—I wonder—if—" She left the sentence unfinished, musing with a fine sarcasm. Tyrolese descended and held out his hand to her again with the bow of a courtier. This small and pimply young Cræsus affected queenly women, with a manner as though they had been created purely to embellish his fortunate life.

The "wreck's" broken laugh rang in my ears again. "Heard how I got my timbers fixed over there to the ledges? I stood my own pilot forty years, and was never turned ashore from no vessel

EVERYWHERE SELL AN EVIL SPIRIT

afore. Nothin' saved off her but one chain and an anchor—"

The salt surges of the Bar! I should see them again at evening. The day was wearing out. "One chain and an anchor," I repeated; "so much was saved 'off' me, Infra!"—so I communed with the absent—"the chain leads to you, wherever you are, and the anchor is in your heart."

Dorna, too, was pining for the salt. "We got to be settin' our sails homewards!" she affirmed. "Has any o' you folks seen a little, wiry, dretful smart contraption of a man child, with one tooth fresh hauled this mornin', around a-bossin' the whole o' God's earth wherever he sets his foot on it?"

At this intimate photographic description of her heir, every hand went up, so to speak. All had seen him; all recognized him.

"Sandy boy alongside of him," some one said, by way of further illustrating the immediate background, "with feet and legs 't looks as though they'd never seen ary shoe or stockin'."

"Yes," said Dorna, "little Everywheres was alongside of him."

"They been a-ridin' the flyin' hosses on the merry-go-round over there to the other end o' the grounds ever sence they come. Some one handed up their dinner to 'em, and they kep' a-ridin'. They be'n a-ridin' steady."

"And it's a nickel every turn!" piped up a boy who had been denied even a taste of such luxury, eying Dorna narrowly.

Dorna sighed. "Wait till I git into my shoes," said she, promptly slipping her stockinged feet into those articles.

Dinsmore and Johnny were expecting Dorna at

FLOOD-TIDE

about this time. They were not nonplussed—they were palely stoical. As they sped on their dizzy, harshly musical flight, Johnny sat facing the tail of a many-hued zebra, while Dinsmore, as trick rider, had squirmed up the neck of a towering giraffe, and now, amid the strident strains of this most horrible of music, rode triumphantly astride her very head!

As the machine whirled past Dorna, she was breathless. Dinsmore, knowing it was his last turn, leered at her and winked rakishly. When the full stop came, he and Johnny descended, a little unsteady on their legs at first.

“Where did you git your money for ridin’ all day on that squawkin’ churn from the bottomless pit and the worm that never ceaseth, amongst horned critters and onnateral beasts sech as your grandpa Gleeson is always expoundin’ of in the book of Revelations?” demanded Dorna, the ornateness of her query by no means detracting from its climactic force.

“Johnny paid,” said Dinsmore, with a mouth otherwise firmly closed.

Dorna marched the two boys away from the surrounding crowd, which then followed afar, as it dared, in a tail.

“Where did you git your money for such works, little Everywheres?”

Everywheres was placid and happy; his blue eyes looked up at Dorna frankly:

“I sold a evil sperrit to Mister Dunbar.”

“What?”

“I sold him a old evil sperrit ’t Cap’n Marlow thrun out o’ his windy a spell ago, ’n’ I picked it up; ’twas a old evil sperrit in a little piece o’ paper. I sold it to Tyrry Dunbar jest for a sperrit—he’ll have

EVERYWHERE SELL AN EVIL SPIRIT

to find out whether it's a good un or a bad un himself! He's a mean man. I didn't tell him what kind of a sperrit it was!"

Johnny had not a keen eye for winking, like Dinsmore; his face expressed only a large and implicit expectation of approval.

"Sellin' evil sperrits!" cried Dorna, in disgust. "Why can't you steer your little cockleshells straight on this sea o' life, instead of wanderin' around in the midst of all sech deeds of darkness and corruption as you can get any smell of? I never see sech harissments!"

Dinsmore, parted from his companion, was plumped down firmly on the floor of the express, between the duck crate and Zeke's enlargement, for the homeward journey, and Dorna took the reins from the start.

"I don't care!" said Dinny, with a sort of ferocious joy, dreams of the zebra and the giraffe still shouting through his brain, "there's been *one* good while to-day that I hain't been under pet'coat gov'ment!"

The learned pig was still insolently sullen, and the Israelitish ducks gazed silently through their grating with eyes bitter with contempt. "Come again next year!" the throng cried after us, with moderated earnestness, for Bayruck was presiding yet a little longer over the tent.

"Ef you 'ain't took up with the fate of Sodom and Gomorrer by that time," answered Dorna, seriously, "I will. Here's hopin'!" she cried back, as a last farewell—and we were once more bound for the Infinite and the tides.

"I wouldn't live inland, not if every space and acre of it was throwed straight at me," affirmed our driver, loosening and tautening the reins on Minny's

FLOOD-TIDE

back as a further churn to her already ambitious and spluttering gait homeward. "I've punished out a dretful day, but I've done some good by it."

"Ye didn't go to do good; ye went to show off yer old truck," said the cynical and rasping voice of Dinny from the far rear of the express.

Dorna did not heed the interruption. "Don't end over now, Minny," she counselled our striving mare courageously; "we're passin' through a weary Jordan, but we shall smell Canaan afore a great while now. Let's keep right end up and show our stubility. What ye stoppin' here for? Think I'm go'n' to h'ist out for this little mess?"

The little mess was a hill leading to the summit of a still longer decline.

"You trust my guidin' hand and go 'long!" said Dorna, inspiring Minny's halting form at the pitch, "and don't waste none o' your strength holdin' on us back!"

"She *will* end over!" said Dinny, hopefully, with a loud toot on the green pumpkin stem which he cherished as a souvenir from the fair.

"She won't end over neither, for she can't. I got sech a brace on her head, her forefeet don't stay by the earth long enough for a end-over. Seems to me it's airin' up. Didn't ye ketch a puff then? Wonder ef the wind's right to take us along ef we h'isted our umbrells."

Dinny pocketed his pumpkin stem and sprang up to sniff the air. "It's jest right, ma. Ef you'll spread yours where you're settin', and Cap'n Alfred and I h'ist ours standin' up, it 'll make the ol' express go so it 'll be all Minny can do to keep for'ards of her!"

There never was a fairer day nor an evening of clearer atmosphere; nevertheless, we sped towards the

EVERYWHERE SELLS AN EVIL SPIRIT

golden west with three ample umbrellas spread and trimmed cautiously to the breeze. Standing in the centre of the express, with one hand supporting Zeke's enlargement, I was glad to form both mainmast and mainsail to our homeward scudding. The glorious sting of the salt air began to greet our perishing nostrils. Scenes, not near, but familiar, appeared. A woman sprang from a doorway and headed us off with outstretched arms. "Dorna Gleeson!" she cried, "do my very eyes behold your livin' tabernacle once more?"

Dorna admitted that it was even so, and, cheerfully and laboriously alighting, went into the house with her fond assailant. Preliminary strains from the parlor organ streaming through the open window announced the conception of a musical *séance*. The gold of the west was already deeply mellowing, the last of the cow-bells went tinkling, tinkling through the lanes, while, still miles away from home, Dinsmore and I lay with furled sails stagnantly anchored at the side of the road.

"What is that in thine hand?" pealed through the window—

"What is that in thine hand?—

Hear the tur'ble command.

Oh, what has thou gleanéd?—

What is that in thine hand?"

"By gosh!" said Dinsmore, hungry and desperate, wiping his snarling countenance with the back of his sleeve, "folks talk about fallin' in love with women! They mus' be darn fools! They mus' be darn hard up for somethin' to love! You jest wait and see ef I ever git married!" he whined spitefully, through wrathful tears. "You jest wait and see!"

FLOOD-TIDE

“‘What is that in thine hand?’” came in renewed jubilation from the window. Dinsmore was reminded of something; he took out his pumpkin stem.

“I’ll show ye what I got in my hand,” he said, and with distorted features he seemed to blow his very vitals into that low instrument. So direful a tooting was made we fancied ourselves monopolists of the surrounding air waves, and that we had drowned all other key-boards. But when Dorna appeared, after unhurried spaces of time, it was with a smiling air innocent of our wrathful designs. Her friend came to the express entwined with her, arms about waists. During the process of disentwining and mounting and the absorption of their mutual farewell, Dinsmore sprang softly from hub to hub, crept along the shaft, and took his old place as postilion on Minny’s neck. When we were under way again, Dorna’s eyes took in this fact.

“Dinsmore Gleeson, I told you to set aft!”

“I’m a old bachelor, ma, and I’m allas goin’ to be a old bachelor. I’m goin’ to set where I like.”

“Don’t you love your ma?” said the mother, gravely.

“I love my ma,” replied Dinsmore with a note of some cynicism, “but I pity my pa.”

“Well, do you take your little pelt around aft,” commanded Dorna, with dignity, for Dinsmore had now the first draught on the reins, and Minny was made to clatter past rose-wreathed and vine-clad doorways where the voices of siren-sisters called and arms gesticulated to Dorna to halt and to tarry. There was neither halting nor tarrying. Dorna could only wave her hand in passing.

“Ef you’ll go and set aft, little son,” said Dorna,

EVERYWHERE SELL AN EVIL SPIRIT

winningly, "you can toot on yer punkin stem all ye like!"

"Pooh! I had all the music I want for one day. But I'll keep the punkin stem all right and play on it to ye lots o' other times, ma."

Dorna yielded, sighed, and sank back luxuriously on the meal-bag. The smartness of her son was not an unpleasant object of contemplation, after all. So we clattered persistently homeward.

Grandpa Gleeson stood in the lane with a lantern. "I thought ye'd ended over," said he, with a groan of relief devoid of all allegory.

"I tell ye, grappy," said Dinsmore, as he assisted the old man at last in leading the horse to the stable, "the' was *one* good while to-day that I wa'n't under no pet'coat gov'ment!"

"Eh, little son?" said grandpa, looking sagely at his heir; "how did ye escape the 'suttility o' the woman'?"

XXVII

A HOUSE - WARMING



YOU are not the child of that lout, Alpy, I believe," said Dunbar, guardedly.

"Be careful how you speak of poor daddy."

"I think he's none of yours."

"Oh, look here, Tyrolese Dunbar," said the girl, jumping up with mock glee, "was I saved off of a wreck? I've always wanted to be that. Speak up and say I was saved off a wreck!"

"Very possibly it may be proved," said Tyrolese, in a dry and earnest tone, "that you were saved off of a wreck."

"And I was not saved for *you*, either!" Alpy's hat was canted rather to the side of her head, but somehow the girl was never jaunty; she made different phases of the majestic. The gloom of her strange eyes made even her mirth obscure. "I'm of great and noble family," she continued, showing her white, slightly overlapped teeth; "of course, I am that."

"I dare say it may be proven you are of excellent family."

"I hope I'm the daughter of a wild Indian and a smuggler—a jail-bird—a terror of some sort. There! I hope you enjoy your mysteries. I don't want them."

A HOUSE-WARMING

She turned from him with such airy indifference that Dunbar could not believe his senses.

"My soul! Wouldn't you like to know even who your own mother is—if you could?" he called after her alluringly. She paid no heed, snatching up a late wood-daisy in her path.

"'Rich man—poor man—beggar-man—thief—doctor—lawyer—Indian chief'"—as she walked on, Alpena plucked the petals repeatedly, to tell her fortune.

"'Indian chief!' I'm to marry an Indian chief. Good. Now, let's see how many children." She glanced delicately about, but there was no one in sight; she had left Dunbar at a sharp turn of the road. She tore out the yellow heart of the flower and blew upon it in the palm of her hand; so many tiny stamens as remained she counted after the religiously slow method of mathematics which prevailed at the Bar.

'Forty-four. I'm to have forty-four children.'" Alpena leaned against a tree and screamed with laughter.

"Won't you tell me what it is, Miss Marlow, and let me laugh too?" said Dunbar, very respectfully announcing himself again from a distance.

"No, indeed, not you." Alpena shook her head, tears still on her cheeks, the quivering muscles in her chin making their accompaniment as of sensitive strings to the silvery instrument of her speech.

"You are not a human being at all," he said. "You are a tall harp set up there against the tree for the wind to blow upon."

"I am a human being, and I am going to an entertainment here by the Narrows. You are not to come tagging after. You are not my young man."

FLOOD-TIDE

"Who is your young man?"

"He is an Indian chief," said Alpy, with white teeth and still quivering chin; "I may meet him this very evening."

Dunbar, meaning to follow later, lingered by those sublime ledges. It was a sight vastly to entertain even the most dormant soul.

"Woe! woe! woe!" called the surf down by Black Rock; the white breakers, as with the puissant hands of angels, fingered the great mass, sheltered it with their foam-wings, then retreated with impetuous sighs for the dark stains they found there. But the tide did the work. Dunbar sat and watched, enthralled. Submerged—hidden—forgiven, it all lay in the calm of the level ocean, and the paradise of the sunset found for it a hue as tender as the rest.

Dunbar watched, and his hard, worldly little face was awed: he saw great forces, sublime color, but no tenderness.

"It's a cruel place for human beings to live perched up here," he muttered. "I'll be glad when Alpy is away from it."

The thought of her did not tantalize him now, for he was sure of her. His own vessel was being manœuvred by Dave Marlow back and forth along the coast, on a sham enterprise of which Dunbar was supposed to be the foolish dupe. The vessel lay in harbor this evening, and Dave, jovial from his cups, had sculled ashore. He lurched over from his own domain to where Dunbar sat on the bluffs in bold relief against the sky.

"'Rah, mate. How do?"

"Do you drink aboard the vessel, Dave?" said Tyrolese, with a scowl.

"No. No man 't knows a damn drinks 'cept when

A HOUSE-WARMING

he comes ashore. But I ain't touched nothin' for a year. Don't get nothin' to touch. I'm all knocked up with a sunstroke," said the giant, drawing his hand over his curly head and simpering like a genial sun.

"The devil takes care of you, anyway," muttered Tyrolese; "they say you've never struck anything yet—but fool's luck."

Dave did not like the other's tone; his face suddenly clouded. "I'm sick o' this new business," he said; "sometimes wish 't I was back in the *Old Bum*, like a Christian. Folks don't like you, but they say I'm maulin' ye wuss 'n a pirate, sailin' back and fo'th from here to Po'tland with a teacupful of fish. Zeke Gleeson does all the smackin', and Tim and Joe Batson is the only enemies he's got 't ever hands me over a lobster, and them I have to stow away like pizen for fear o' befoulin' yer vessel or gettin' some smell aboard her. We're a cussed laffin'-stock—that's what we be."

"Where is the *Old Bum*?"

"She 's layin' to, over to harbor."

The thought of her black hulk compared with his present sailing quarters seemed to moderate Dave. "Why don't ye go aboard yer vessel and see whether she's kept ship-shape or not?" he inquired in an injured tone.

"Oh, we'll go aboard her before long. Meanwhile avoid sunstroke as much as possible, Dave. You're a good fellow. You don't blab what you know, even when you are drunk. I knew my man!"

Tyrolese further accentuated his approval by drawing a roll of notes from his pocket and selecting some substantial specimens, which he handed to Dave. "Keep the fish-market running, old man.

FLOOD-TIDE

There'll be fun by-and-by. What is going on over here at Mel Stover's?"

"They've had a seine-mendin' bee all day. House warmin', this evenin'. Dance."

"House-warming! The house is old enough to topple down."

"Needs warmin' all the more, Sandhopper. Come 'long. Alpy 'll be over there. I got four pounds o' candy here for Alpy to give out. She's proud, Alpy is. She likes to patternize folks, and she shall, too! All the boys 's in love with her, and she's my gal. Come 'long!"

"No, we won't go together."

"All right—best for us not go t'gether." Dave winked and lurched on. After such a hint as to the policy necessary to their conduct, nothing could have induced him to walk with Tyrolese.

Still facing the august sea-distances, fascinated by the far flight of the ocean wind, by the call of the surf below, Tyrolese was thinking at last he would rise and move on, when a tall figure in old broad-cloth, with an arched nose, arched instep, purely patrician and abundantly classic, loomed up before him. "Why could not that face and figure have been given where they could do some good—where they belonged?" was always Dunbar's first disgusted thought in facing Arch. "Born probably of some escaped Norwegian convict, combined with some 'longshore washerwoman, he is a perfect stiff young god! While a fellow like me—"

Dunbar walked farther away from the edge of the bluffs. At least he had not consciously committed any offence against Arch, but these people were queer, and the young god's face was decidedly imperious and pale.

A HOUSE-WARMING

"Mr. Dunbar, I want you to explain to me why you invited Margaret Langthorne over to the fair?"

"Why, certainly," said Tyrolese, with natural surprise. "Because she is a charming woman and I enjoyed her society."

"She belongs to me."

"Impossible! Dr. Margaret Langthorne! Eh? Oh—ah! Well—I did not know your good fortune." ("You are being transcendently fooled, you spawn of a trawl-tub," was Dunbar's inward comment.)

"She is a city woman, and they have different ways," Arch went on, gravely. "She saw no harm in going with you. But here 'longshore, where two gives their word to one another, they don't go keeping other company; and no man 'long here ever invites another man's girl the way you did. It is not the way. We have our way, Mr. Dunbar, and we abide by it."

"I assure you I shall conform hereafter entirely to the conventions of the community in this regard," said Tyrolese in a dry tone, with the suggestion of a sneer. "Allow me to congratulate you. Miss Langthorne's slight superiority in years—"

"I'm old enough," Arch interrupted, quickly, claspings a jutting rock with a hand that seemed a part of its massive substance—"I'm old enough to protect Miss Langthorne and myself from any word from any man's lips. You keep a civil tongue in your head, here and hereafter, Tyrry Dunbar, or you'll find me some years older 'n Methusaleh and about the same size as Samson!"

"I shall endeavor, surely, not to reproduce in you those amiable characters." With an indifferent tilt of his hat, Dunbar walked away.

"You are a coward, though, and you will mind

FLOOD-TIDE

what I say as well as if you were a gentleman," Arch reflected. A faint strain from the fiddles, already beginning the carouse at Mel Stover's, reached him, but could not in the least draw him. Harlan had come with him in the skiff, for it was a wild and unfamiliar set who sometimes sailed over to Mel Stover's on the bluffs. Alpena would be there, innocent and haughty both. So Harl remained to stand guard towards the late hours.

Arch clambered down the ledges and set the skiff towards the Reach—his soul for Margaret. She would not approve of his coming, probably, yet she seemed to have grown rather to depend upon disapproving of him! "Poor darling, she is ill," he said to himself, and drew his breath daringly and strangely. "Wait until we are in our own home, quiet and at peace." At home with Margaret! Yet his passion took ever the bewildering form of a supreme devotion—bewildering since unconsciously he compassionated the very creature whom he so adored. This teased Margaret and was another subject for her mental ridicule, that he whom she chided and flouted so was, unacknowledged to himself, and immovably, a strong tower of compassion round about her.

Harlan joined the loungers at Mel Stover's door, approaching slowly with his hands in his pockets in such a sad, inconspicuous way that public sentiment as there represented took rather to commiserating him.

"What's the matter, Harl? Look as though ye'd been laid out over to the ledges and the gulls had been pickin' at ye. Yer eyes are et half-way through yer head. *That* ain't no way to get yer girl back. Go in and dance her over the floor, the way that wild cuss from Buck's Harbor is doin'."

A HOUSE-WARMING

"Mind your business," said Harl, in a sensible, dispassionate way, and the answer seemed to win him much respect.

"Do you know anywheres *I* can get a anchor like that?" said an intrepid visitor, nodding towards Alpena's graceful form. "Purtiest anchor I ever seel!"

"They ain't to be had for love nor money," said Harl, with his slow, frank smile; "take one o' the others."

"Fact. Alpy Marlow's long, but she don't bring down the scales to any account. Nigh six foot, and I bet she don't weigh a hunderd and twenty pound. I don't see no Venus to them proportions."

"Take a odd creatur' like that," said the voice of a sage, "they're the most tormentin' dear of any sometimes. 'Tain't a case o' good straight love, but they fascinate ye. The' was a woman fascinated me once—and once I was struck by lightnin'."

Alpena and her "Indian chief" careered that way—her intense eyes, the gold light on her dusky hair, the flush on her cheeks. "Tormentin' dear, by gun!" gasped the youth who had wanted her for his heart's anchor. She saw Harlan and gave him a glance of glad recognition. Accustomed to queen it wherever she would, she recognized, however, with some qualms, the wild element in this motley company. Dave was there, but all too cheerfully inclined to fall asleep. Tyrolese Dunbar had been interested in securing a post of observation most advantageous for sudden retreat. Harlan was there, and she felt at rest.

"The other girls has got on more colors 'n her. She's colory enough all alone by herself in white, she is. Phew! she swings easy. Say, Lote, which

FLOOD-TIDE

was the hardest on ye, the fascination or the lightnin' stroke?"

"Git out!" said Lote, betaking himself uncere- moniously to the reserve of personal reminiscence. But presently he continued, in a matter-of-fact tone: "Some says thunder-showers is seven mile or more away from the 'arth and only falls over one little area. 'Tain't no sech thing. When a thunder- shower comes, it pelts down over the whole 'arth, an' them c'lestial fireworks wa'n't no seven mile away from me when *I* discovered 't lightnin' was electricity!"

"Oh, come, Lote—lost your g'ography? That was old Franklin discovered that, 'long o' his kite."

"No Franklin 'bout it, and I didn't have to send up no kite, neither. I was standin' ag'in' that old pine-tree back o' my hen-house when *I* discovered 't lightnin' was electricity. Makin' discoveries is a personal matter, I tell ye. Franklin may have discovered it to suit himself, in his way, but he didn't discover it for me, not by a damn sight!"

"Wal', which was the worst, the lightnin' or the fascination?"

"Let me tell ye somethin', young man," said Lote, squinting severely at his interlocutor, "afore you stand there another hour gapin' at that long-shanked creatur' in the white gownd—you better go out and hunt around for some lightnin'. She ain't for your kind. She's jest come over here patternizin. The's fine eagles hangin' 'round after her."

The noise was growing uproarious. Some women were making chowder on a stove at the far end of the barrack-like room, and some of the roughest of the company, boys and girls together, dancing down that way, tried to dislodge the kettle by the vigor

A HOUSE-WARMING

of their stamping. Three rough-shod violin players, in another quarter, were keeping time with their boots.

Dave, with a studied air of dignity, lumbered over to where Harlan stood.

"I'm all balled up with sunstroke, Harl. Goin' to lie down little while over there on the l'unge. Look out for little girl."

"That's what I'm here for," answered Harl.

Dave, politely removing his boots, stretched himself without other formality on the chintz-covered lounge. The ancient floor was uneven and treacherous, and the dancers who had tried to overturn the kettle now transferred their attention to rolling Dave off of the lounge.

"Come 'long and dance, you!" said a male specimen of wild and untrammelled roughness to Tyrolese Dunbar, and, ignoring his efforts to escape, captured him, gave him to one of Mel Stover's girls, and by close oversight regulated and encouraged the dancing of the two until it approached somewhat near to his own ideals of enthusiasm.

Mel Stover himself, wandering here and there with a furtive eye on his possessions, passed under the window with twenty pounds of dried haddock, which he meant to secrete away from the chowder-makers. But the darkness could not cover him. A sudden pail of water, thrown from the window, overturned him, haddock and all.

"This is a purty way to give a man a house-warm-in'!" he cried in uncontrollable wrath at last, rising to his feet and running to the house for his gun. That weapon had been seized. The tall, wild man who had arrogated Alpena's dancing to himself for his own exclusive enjoyment had the gun in charge.

FLOOD-TIDE

He now began tossing and catching it before Mel's eyes with wonderful strength and cunning.

Alpena went softly to Harlan. "Take me home, Harlan, please."

"Quick!" he whispered. "Don't look for your hat."

But as they were passing out the gun-thrower sprang forward.

"Ye can't carry off that girl, I tell ye. She's dancin' 'long o' me."

Harlan knew there was but one answer for the fierce flame in the other's eyes. With a quick thrust of his hard fist he sent him to the floor. If Dave, if even Tyrolese, had run to his aid at that moment, when his enemy was down, he might have escaped with the clinging beauty on his arm. Dave half opened his eyes.

"Wait till I git into my shoes!" he declared in stout Bar fashion, and sank back to repose.

Tyrolese, eager for personal safety, took the opportunity to make another attempt to slink out, and, as before, was seized and brought back. Some followers of the wild chief, summoned from their orgy over the chowder, now surrounded Harl with a menace that was half bewilderment and half crazy-shouting mirth. The gun-thrower himself staggered to his feet.

"Tie him to the post!" he cried. "We'll lash him to the post. Here! by the door, where he can see me dance with the girl! Here! Tie him! Hooray! Hooray!"

Harl, with his heart breaking for Alpena, fighting in the agony of desperation, laid out two men before he was secured. "Touch the girl," he cried, grinding his teeth, his eyes glaring like a wild

A HOUSE-WARMING

beast's, and the sweat dripping from his bloody face, "touch that girl, and every man over to the Bar 'll hunt ye till he finds ye and kills ye, if it's to the world's end!"

"Come, my beauty, I'll lead ye another dance," the gun-thrower whispered gently to Alpena, drawing her again to the floor. Her head hung like a flower, yet even so she still carried her supreme and haughty air as though nothing should ever harm her. The wild man bent as if to kiss her, then drew back without accomplishing the act, though her black eyes had not even deigned to unsheath their fire at him.

"She's a high and mighty one—she's too good for us!" he shouted, with some scorn, "but we'll all have a dance with her. We'll break this fine colt before the night is over. Here! Come on! We'll all swing her."

Obedient to the invitation, as fast as one partner swung her around the floor another seized her hand, and still Alpena, growing ever paler and dizzier, danced lightly with a faint smile of unconcern on her lips. Nearly dead with fear as she was at heart, the poor girl's nature at least was nobly born and could not show fear.

Tyrolese was made to swing her with the rest.

He was craven, confidently expecting death or wounds before this wild night was over.

Alpena glanced down at him with simple contempt, spotless of reproach.

As, at length, nearly fainting, she staggered against the tall clock, her thin hands lifted to shield herself, Harlan hissed and gnawed savagely at the rope which bound him. Then it was that a woman's form glided into the room.

"Infra!" Alpena cried and stretched out her arms.

FLOOD-TIDE

The candles showed an aureole of light about the woman's head, but it was the gray hair of Mrs. Temple this time, not Infra's auburn locks. The stately woman, alone, from her walk through the unfamiliar night, clad in some shimmering gray cloth, pure and foreign to all this coarse-hued scene, swept towards Alpena with a magnificent instinct shining paramount over all weariness and fear in her eyes.

Alpena saw her. "Mrs. Temple! You?" she gasped—"alone in the night!"

Then, at the strange smile in those eyes, the girl sobbed; her perfect Madonna face seemed to grow small, weazened almost, with a look of infancy.

"Mother!" she said.

Mrs. Temple had her in her arms. The place was stilled. The pathos of the gray-haired woman's face commanded—not her elegance. She bore the marks of suffering and meekness on her face. It was lifted in unconscious appeal. They paid heed to her quivering lips.

"Release the man whom you have tied there."

They did this in a body, fearing Harl. But he came instantly towards the women, blood flowing from his lacerated hands, his blue eyes big with joy.

"They only wearied her with dancing, poor lamb. Not one o' them so much as dared to kiss her, Mrs. Temple—not one."

Alpena took his hands and laid her cheek down to them, lifting it touched with his blood. "He fought for me so!" she said. "He would have given his life fighting for me, and never thought of himself."

Harlan smiled upon her brotherly—not with hope. Those light-blue eyes, accustomed to scanning sea

A HOUSE-WARMING

and sky, had measured the horizon of his earth. "The wind 'll go down with the sun" was a saying at the Bar. So, as the sun of hope had set in his breast, it was calm where once the tempests had careened, jubilant or fierce. He was dead to himself, given for love's sake to others. That makes a rare face—the only impregnable strong human face.

Mrs. Temple looked at him curiously.

"You"—she murmured the question gravely, with her inscrutably sweet smile—"belong to the saints."

"I perress to," said Harlan, blushing and hesitating about taking her outstretched white hand with his own, coarse and blood-stained. She held his hand an instant, and her eyes, looking straight into his, seemed to exalt him with a fine radiance.

"What sent you to me?" Alpena turned to her. "What made you come?"

"I cannot tell you. It was as it has been before, some instinct brought me to you."

"And I called you—mother." Alpena laughed softly.

The older woman's white face looked inspired.

"Yes."

Tyrolese, unnoticed, kept near the group for safety. He followed when they started homeward.

"Mother!" he said to himself. "She's not your mother, unless signs lie. You had quite a fine mother indeed, Alpy Marlow—and I hold a secret in your life—if I live to get home with it."

XXVIII

SUBMISSION. THE CAPTAIN'S BOUQUET



OME tells me I allas did have a kind o' gift for splicin' up a nosegay," said Captain Abram Shale, "but Sylphy says I ain't no more idee o' arrangin' a mess o' flowers 'n a cow!"

He held with evident fondness, and yet at a stiff distance from his person, as though it had been a centipede, a bouquet of bold and sturdy wild flowers, so compactly bound with the rusty end of a hawser that the whole mass resembled a missile of war. In his other hand was a basket of lobsters.

"The women folks says Infry's got one o' the purtiest little boys they ever see. So I brought him over a posy bunch and a mess o' shorts."

Captain Shale's face, often a benign sun, was on this occasion positively hilarious.

"Thank you, he is! He's wonderful!" I could not express my emotions, and Captain Shale continued indifferently, to my relief:

"I don't often save a mess o' shorts unless it's for a invalid or somebody in slender health. I esteem the law all right 't demands lobsters should be a certain length. Last time the lobster warden beat in here, detectin', I happened to have a mess o' shorts in the bottom o' my boat. 'For the love of Aaron, throw a sack over them shorts, Abe!' says he, 'or I

SUBMISSION. THE CAPTAIN'S BOUQUET

shall see 'em!' So I thrun a sack over 'em and he hove up 'longside, and we set and talked. Tom and me was old mates. Yes, Sylphy says he weighs ten pound; she says his countenance favors Infry."

"I hope so. I hope his soul will favor her, too. My God, captain, she's a saint!"

"Sartin'. Wal', whatever little show o' 'thority ye been havin' 'round to home is gone now. Ye got a new boss."

"Won't you come in, captain? I'll let you peek at him through the door."

"No. No, thank ye. Sylphy said she heered ye'd got a mess o' hired help around. She reckoned yer worldly fortin's had come up and ye'd be goin' away likely when the baby was big enough. Wal', wal', that's right—only I hope he won't grow up to set his heart too much on clo's, on this worl's ambition an' show an' fashion, which is only one kind and another o' clo's, clo's, clo's."

"I wish with all my heart, Captain Abram, we might stay here, where the fashion of this world and its thin social aspirations have already passed away."

"Wal', I don' know as I wish it for ye. Ye're young and got means. Go out and show yer character as jinded to the saints—lovin', not schemin'; givin', not stealin'; helpin', not tromplin' down. And, above all things, show yer submission."

"What?"

"Once when I hove into harbor through a storm, I went ashore Sunday, and I went into a church in a monstrous big city 't you know about, and I heered a man 't they was payin' twelve thousand dollars a year preach a sermon on 'Asperation.'"

"Yes."

FLOOD-TIDE

"He was slick, and he had the music o' speech to his tongue's end."

"I know."

"But he hadn't been knocked 'round the seas the way some has. 'By-and-by, sometime a long ways off, when he comes to it,' thinks I, 'he'll preach a sermon on submission.' Asperation's kind o' dizzy and thin. It's allas aimin' at somethin' for yerself: ef it's to be an angel, ye want your wings full as big and white as the rest on 'em. But submission 'd work around unnoticed, and let its own heart out to git somebody else a pair o' wings.

"Somehow," said he, unconsciously plucking a turnip from the garden-patch and disclosing its inner luxuries with his knife, "asperation kind o' makes me think o' towers, man-built, but submission's like the ocean—it's grander 'n all the rest. 'Tain't no little, poor, meek thing—submission ain't. It's astoundin'; it's wonderful; it holds all the rest."

"But we ought to make life a battle, captain."

He crunched a section of turnip; it was sweet to him, but he was not sensual, and a simple thoughtfulness alone shone on his face.

"A battle ter keep yer heart pure and trustin', and submit ter be called a fool; to talk direc' along o' God, and submit ter be hove out o' the church; ter love mankind and stand by 'em, and submit ter be deceived an' wronged without yerself wrongin' an' hatin'—that's the battle. 'Tain't to git gilt harnesses nor lay up a vault o' gold ter buy yerself a place in polertics or s'ciety; them's empty battles with the wind moanin' ahind 'em. I tell ye I've been knocked over all seas, an' I've witnessed—an' I know."

"Yes, you know. You know well."

SUBMISSION. THE CAPTAIN'S BOUQUET

“Ter take inter account yer own failin’s an’ the follies o’ yer youth an’ strength, taggin’ after ye, an’ to submit ye’re weak, an’ still ter keep yer faith and strive, ter keep up heart an’ strive unendin’—that’s the battle.

“Ter think sometimes ye’ve ’arned a little favor, an’ only git a blow, an’ ter submit and trust. Ter know the coast a little an’ grow kind o’ fond o’ the old landmarks, and then ter face a dark channel to a sea ye never sailed—and still ter submit an’ smile—that’s the battle.

“Ye ain’t troubled. Somehow ye know it’s all yours, though ye lose everythin’. Ye ain’t frettin’. The sea don’t bargain for no boats, nor worry about hurryin’ to port, for she holds all that sails an’ she flows to every shore. An’ it’s jest that way with the soul that’s l’arned submission.”

“If a diet of raw turnips hath aught to do with this man’s philosophy,” thought I, “I will partake also; for it is sound, and I too am a saint.” So I stooped down and unearthed a specimen, which I proceeded to peel with my knife.

The captain was pleased. “I mus’ say,” said he, “I favor a bite from the fruits o’ the ’arth, when I can get it, afore all the nateral spice has been biled outer ’em. The’ was another thing about this man ’t preached on ‘Asperation’—he kep’ a even countenance right along. Now a man ’t preaches—his countenance ought ter change. I’d rather he’d hitch an’ stammer ef only his countenance—Wal’, little Everywheres, it’s a singerlar thing about you—we ought by rights to be allas expectin’ ye, and yet ye’re allas turnin’ up unexpected! Wal’, little Everywheres, what’s wantin’?”

“Aunt Sylphy says if ye didn’t know no better ’n

FLOOD-TIDE

to stand sunnin' around here, to fetch ye home. She reckoned Captain Alfred's in the way too, hankerin' around all the time to see how Infry and the baby is. She said to fetch ye both over to the house, an' ye could play 'Snap Everlastin'.'"

We started towards the captain's house without protest.

"I'd jest about as soon not gamble at all," the captain owned, "as to play 'Snap Everlastin'.'"

"What is it?"

"Ye nominate a trump and deal the cards, an' the one 't says 'Snap' first, seein' a trump, gits it. The one 't gits the most trumps, deals, an' so it goes. It's 'everlastin'' fast enough, but it's punishin' out a dreadful hour to gamble that way."

"Why can't we play euchre?"

"Sylphy won't have it—not even when she's spang up ag'in' my elbow. She says ef we'd run any meetin' lately or sailed over to Beel Island for a conference, we might indulge a little; as it is, she says the Bar has got to step careful. She says the' ain't nobody even been under a topic for six weeks. Tilly, over there—she suggested startin' a Village Improvement S'ciety—ef we couldn't do nothin' better. So a few o' the women held a meetin' and voted for sidewalks without gittin' no quorum; an' Fyryards, 't was out listenin' under the windy, got into sech a fit o' laffin' 't he had to be took home an' laid up in mustard-plasters, to get his in'ards back into place.

"Sylphy says a Village Improvement S'ciety's nothin' but an ongodly business anyway. Guess I'll pick up my full pails here to the spring."

We travelled on, the captain ungrudgingly immersing my boots from the overflowing slop of his

SUBMISSION. THE CAPTAIN'S BOUQUET

buckets by the way. "Sylphy—she appears to be tryin' to solemnize the Bar by gittin' folks inter the house so 't Miss Temple 'll see 'em an' put 'em in a book. It's a queer way ter take ter sanctify folks, but that's the tack Sylphy's on now."

Mrs. Temple, without either ink or parchment, rose to greet us, and congratulated me warmly. Her face and form reminded me always of Infra, so that it was homelike to be near her. There was a singular earnestness in her manner and hardly her usual self-possession as she motioned me to a chair at her side. For my story was known, and that I was a simple person rather than brilliant, and sympathetic rather than ambitious, so that if any one had a story to tell it fell naturally to my ear.

"Captain Alfred, I was with your dear wife, and I know—I know that I comforted her."

She had a charming broken utterance when agitated.

"And I thank you with all my heart," I said.

"It is like nothing else—I understand—the consciousness of motherhood—of fatherhood. I understand, for I am not a childless woman. In heaven—on earth—somewhere—I too have a child—a daughter."

"You do not know whether she is living or dead?" I said under my breath.

"It was in England"—she, too, spoke softly. "I am of English birth, and—of noble birth, as it is called. I married—ah, it seems long years ago—I 'ran away' with a poor man—poor and obscure—whom I loved. Finally, in my husband's illness, we were wretchedly poor. He died—and three days afterwards my child was born. The secret of my birth was discovered through some papers I had

FLOOD-TIDE

kept. I was delirious with fever—a pauper. My family were notified—they cared for and received me—but the child—had been taken away.” She spoke like one suffocating.

“Poor lady—poor soul!” I said, and could say no more, for the thought of missing that new little face that had come to Infra’s pillow was like a sword in my heart.

“The woman who had been with me in my illness had a sister—wife of the master of a sailing vessel, about embarking for America; they were childless—they had taken the infant, whom they considered as practically—homeless, and probably—disowned. We traced—we worked desperately and long—the vessel was driven somewhat from its course in a storm and wrecked, with all on board lost. But I do not believe it—somehow I have never believed it!” There was a strange light in her eyes.

“Do you know,” she said, fearlessly lifting that wide, prescient look to me, “anything of the birth of Alpy Marlow? Who was her mother? They tell me Dave Marlow brought her here after the death of some wife abroad, but I have never been able to learn that wife’s residence or name. I have had other assistance in the matter than my own inquiries, but all is vague at that point. My fancy for haunting this coast is not a literary one, you see, and if I might only find and identify my child I could indeed give her position and fortune—and this long, agonizing heartache would end.”

“Madam, if you might!” I said in astonishment. “But Alpy—why, Alpy, she is poor Dave Marlow’s child—she has grown up here from infancy—she is related to us all. Alpy—she can be no other surely than poor Dave Marlow’s child.”

SUBMISSION. THE CAPTAIN'S BOUQUET

"If Dave Marlow has a secret, he guards it sturdily. I am helpless—driven against a rock."

It seemed to me the desperate mania of a childless woman on her sweet face. I could not speak my pity, and I bowed my head.

"Being with Infra—sympathy for you both in your great happiness has brought the past so forcibly before me, and the hope that will never die," she said, in a sane and gentle tone. "The impulse was strong to speak to you; you will regard it as sacred."

"My own wife and child are not more so."

"And shall you take Infra away from the Bar after a while? They tell me so." She buried her own weight of sorrow and suspense in gentleness towards me.

"Yes," I answered. "I shall have Infra—I do not care so much what the environment of life—I shall have heart and hope anywhere with Infra and the child."

"And there are true hearts everywhere," she smiled.

"I shall have Infra," I repeated like a schoolboy on a form.

"She is wonderful," murmured Mrs. Temple, glad in my content. "I have never met another just like her. She is so simply great she is not even fretted by meanness and untruth—she seems incapable of perceiving them. She waits for good, as though it were inevitable."

Her generous warmth touched me keenly as I looked at her early whitened hair, the "hope that would never die" mingled with the pathetic sadness in her still youthful eyes. But in her dream of the recovery of her child she seemed to me under a mania, and I felt only an unspeakable pity for her.

XXIX

THE SMILING CLOCK



ET there an' toot on a green punkin stem ef ye want to—but the's a canvasser comin'."

Dinsmore fled joyfully. Dorna, having thus spoken, ran up to put her purse in her shoe, as usual, and hung the key on the lattice. I was there of an errand, and the temptation was irresistible to fly to the cove with those who had been warned; for, while we delighted in peddlers, owing to some clean default of literary taste, in which conscience played no part either way as a factor, we fled instinctively from the occult and pertinacious wiles of the book-canvasser.

"I maintain it's jest as well to scud in ahead of a squall when ye can, as to stay an' take it face to," said Dorna, peering around Shelter Rock to note whether the canvasser had yet appeared in the lane.

"I might jest as well 'a' stayed home and bo't his book," said Aunt Sylphy, "for I was carryin' four dozen o' eggs in my apern when I heered the news, an' I struck out sech a gait 't I fell down with 'em, an' I'm daubed from eend to eend an' wet to my skin."

"The's some didn't git the news, 't 'll git ketched," said Dinny, hilariously.

"I yelled to Abram over in the cow-patch," said

THE SMILING CLOCK

Aunt Sylphy, "but he's so moderate I don't know what 'll happen. He may git over in ahind a bowlder somewheres, an' he may not. The last canvasser 't came along read aloud to him two mortal hours out o' the 'Compend'um o' Perlite Etikette,' an' I never see Abe cross afore. He snapped me up first time in his life. 'Ef you ever see that feller comin' down the lane ag'in, Sylphy,' says he, 'ye got my liberties to heave the rollin'-pin at him.'"

"'Most all the men folks is out in the boats," said Dorna, "and Infra's all safe with her nurses an' sech around—the' ain't nothin' goin' to git near her. Tilly, she allas stops an' buys every book 't comes along. I don' know what Cass 'll say to her when he comes home. She reads, and the childern reads, an' buys spectacles every time the pack brings 'em. I don't calkulate for no sech sick an' dyin' habits to git the upper hands o' me—"

"'Sh! he's over abreast o' the school-house."

Dinsmore smothered a sneeze, his eyes shining with excitement. Thus we were waiting breathlessly, when a really beautiful countenance, instinct with human sympathy and mirthful to the point of childishness, faced us frankly at the turn of the rock.

"Now, what I want to know is," said Dorna, "who giv' us away?"

The interloper took off his hat. "I came down merely because this great rock attracted me," he said, and lifted the fatal black case and proceeded to undo its clasps. "I have here a clock—see—in the form of a human face that opens its mouth with every tick—with every tick opens its mouth smiling—see—see."

We gathered around him spellbound.

"Ef I'd 'a' known," said Dorna, heartily, "you

FLOOD-TIDE

wouldn't 'a' found me chasin' myself away from no sech interestin' objec' as that. Is sech a thing as that for sale?"

"Ye-es," he said, regarding it hesitatingly and regretfully, "it's for sale."

"I want you to name your bottom price on it."

"A dollar and a half."

Dorna did not attempt to conceal a gasp at so small remuneration for so great a wonder.

"The magnitude of our enterprise enables us to produce them at so low a figure," he explained.

"I wasn't calkalin' on any more fancy expenses this year," said Dorna, sagaciously giving an external appearance of moderation to an ardor that by no means abated within as she watched the clock tick and smile. "I have to git trousers for Dinsmore every time the pack comes along, and I pretty near cleaned myself out on Zeke's enlargement."

"On what, madam?" he asked, leaning towards her with an almost avaricious desire for enlightenment on his rosy face.

"I say I pretty near cleaned myself out on Zeke's enlargement." Still the clock merchant did not understand, and a dissatisfied awe settled over his countenance.

"Ye got ten dollars up in yer shoe, ma!" interposed Dinsmore, with intrepid eagerness.

"And no thanks to you!" she cried. "Every new spot on this 'arth you plant your foot on, an' every new face you see, you have to go an' tell where I keep my purse an' how much money I got in it."

"But I would not touch it under any circumstances, madam," said the clock-vender, and he looked distressed.

Such directness won us.

THE SMILING CLOCK

"I know you wouldn't," said Dorna, "but you're goin' to have a dollar and a half out of it as soon as I can get up-stairs to the closet an' haul my shoe out. I want my order in on one o' them clocks."

Aunt Sylphy shook herself as best she could—she was naturally stylish—and came forward trippingly, though still dripping with broken eggs.

"You can set down a clock to Mrs. Abram Shale," she said.

He bowed low. It was natural to bow before Aunt Sylphy. Thus, one after another, he from whom we had fled so untimely emerged with us from behind Shelter Rock, the adornment of our circle and laden with orders. There was even a pleasant rivalry in the bosom of each as to which should have him to dine. He went with Grandma Gleeson. The flower of chivalrous sentiment tended towards her. Her cheeks like the dawn, her thick gray hair waving from her temples, she walked away, deftly keeping him at her right, for, owing to the accidents of time, her beautiful blue cotton wrapper was defective by nearly a breadth on the left side, and the apron which she usually wore she had forgotten in her flight.

"Ef I'd had my apern," she said afterwards in recounting these experiences, "I could 'a' slipped it over to the left, an' sailed in through the door full-rigged. As it was, I knew my default."

"My designs was to get him to go through the door first, an' I could 'a' sheered in behind an' grabbed my apern off the chair an' faced him complete; but I reckoned he was one o' this sort 't has to drive a woman through a door first, no matter what happens."

"Howsomever, I tried it out with him on politeness. I stood bowin' at him afore the door, an' he stood

FLOOD-TIDE

bowin' at me, till I saw Bayruck down in the lane, and knew if I stood there passin' curtchys back an' forth with that young man any longer I shouldn't never hear the last of it, so I made a break for the door, with my old yaller petticoat an' them striped stockin's 't a rusticator giv' me glintin' away as ef there'd been a bad spell o' weather an' I was standin' out for a rainbow."

"Did he—did he blush?" we asked.

"No, he was one o' this kind that's so wrought and keyed-up on politeness they don't see ar'y thing they ain't wanted to see. He went straight to the window an' begun a-chantin' on how beautiful the aspects was."

He attended with us on the formalities of post day, Dorna's learned pig following, as had been its habit since our journey to the fair, that metropolitan experience having apparently given it a taste for the widest excursions attainable in its horoscope. But this exemplary young man accepted its presence in as simple and grave a manner as did we ourselves; in fact, nothing, great or small, appeared to afflict him with surprise.

When, late in the conventionalities of the distribution, Margaret Langthorne came over the bank to call personally for her letters, as had frequently been her wont of late, I thought an expression came over the clock-merchant's face as though something for which he had been secretly waiting had arrived. His ruddy skin went white, and the laughing eyes were transformed and narrowed to steely blue glints of flame.

Margaret herself blushed deeply and did not otherwise observe him as she walked away with bent head reading her letters.

THE SMILING CLOCK

"Possibly I can sell the lady a clock," he said, still carrying the sample case with him, and he hastened on to overtake her. But what he said when they were out of sight in the path to the banks was by no means formal.

"Meg!" he addressed her.

For an instant as she turned, her look, like some angel of compunction from the past, seemed to give him all things, tenderness, memory, peace at their meeting. Then as he approached her eagerly the expression changed.

"Poor fellow, why did you come here?" her dissatisfied lips murmured sadly. "How intensely selfish of you! Altogether you are killing me."

"I am not seeking you, Margaret, except for these few moments again. I am a literal clock-vender. Do not be tragical—I am not seeking you." But he saw how worn she appeared physically and mentally: her sallow face, if one might judge by his look, was the darling of his heart's core, and again he stepped towards her impulsively.

"Come, Margaret, I will go back to my profession, and I will conform to its traditions. My uncle holds the place for me. Give us both peace! I will care for you—God knows how tenderly."

"It would not give me peace."

"Well, then," he said, "you had me in long training to prepare me for desolateness. It is no shock. Well, then, a few words, and good-bye."

"How you have disappointed me!" she said, and lifted her wonderful eyes; their reproach drew him near her, but could not baffle him.

"What have I done but to be ever true to you?" he said. "What did these words mean, Margaret?" As tenderly as if he were handling some tokens from

FLOOD-TIDE

the dead he took from a little book in his inner pocket some scraps of paper in her own handwriting. "'Dearest.' 'Dearest.' I kept all those," he said, "and look—what did it mean? 'When I love, it is irrevocably.' 'I love you, and as far as mortal can give herself, I am yours.' 'I am made of stuff you cannot disappoint.'"

A slow, weary smile passed over her lips. "How you cling to the babblings of children. I did not then know the weakness, the childishness of your nature. I am too ill to take the responsibility of such a burden."

"I was twenty-six when you wrote me those words; but do not despise the love of 'children,' Margaret, for the wise would not love you."

"How so?" she asked him, drearily, without rancor.

"I said," he repeated with set lips, "do not despise the love of children, for the wise would not love you."

"Then be wise," she replied, coldly.

"That, thank God, I shall never be, as far as you are concerned. I shall love you—always. The devotion once laid at your feet is yours, seeks you for ever, is restless, homeless without you—"

"Is it always to be the tolerance and care of children?" she interrupted him. "Will there never be a regard, so weary as I am, that I can lean upon? Never one who can understand me? Who will care for the quality of love I have to give?"

She had cut him mortally.

"If you found that one, still he would not be up to your demands nor your measure. We rise by sympathy, I tell you, not by dissection and surgical comment. You killed the heart in me three years ago; its blood flows towards you still, but the organ

THE SMILING CLOCK

itself does not suffer any more, except in dreams. I shall live and be merry, with a dead heart, where you abide, Margaret. A poor man, too—that in itself would have cut me off from you inevitably.”

“Had you been strong and great,” she declared, “I could have been happy with you in a hovel.”

“I am sorry, for your sake, Margaret, that I was not strong and great.” His smile had an irony so humble and so sweet and begging alms no longer of hope, she looked at him curiously.

“I did not come to this place to seek you,” he continued, “though I knew you were in this locality, and I expected to meet you. I shall remain with these people a few days; if I should happen to meet you again while among them, you will recognize me or not, as you choose. I suffer for you; the rest is buried, but life is hard for you, beautiful, unhappy one—worn—ill. It must be, I suppose; it is the way; but, thank Heaven, a single touch can heal, and we all find the same light at last. I’ll wait to hear you play the ‘Palms’ again. It may not be at the house of my uncle, the bishop,” he smiled. “It may be at the end of a toilsome road without soft carpets or holy, tinted lights, but, even so, I’ll wait to hear you play the ‘Palms’ again.”

She turned away her face that was working painfully, but her hand was listless in his, slipped from his as if craving the release.

He walked slowly away. Had she spoken his name he would have bounded to her feet. Dreary in the commonplace sunlight, she watched the disappearance of his frayed coat and the article of cheap merchandise he held in his hand, and pressed her hand to her aching head.

“If it is to be a child, let it be a complete child,

FLOOD-TIDE

without any of the fag of sentiment," she moaned to herself; "the supreme infant is waiting down there for me with his boat. If I am doomed to poverty—ugh!—there are no truly great, and money—the horror of it!—money is the only mitigation of life's ills."

Arch felt so sharply the desperation of her mood, he was silent.

"Poor boy!" she said, her face a pale tragedy, studying him with a commiseration that seemed leagues away from him.

"It's only your head," he said, reaching over his strong hand from the rudder and laying it on hers. "You won't have such headaches when we're home together and your mind is easy."

She burst into hysterical laughter. "Oh, the farce, the travesty of it all! Oh, what a farce it all is!"

"See here," he murmured, "I reckon, darlin', if I planked you down to housekeeping and taking up with such things, instead of all those books you read and study on, your head would mend. Reckon I'll do it."

"And you would soon have a grave in the 'home lot,' as they call it."

"I'd resk it," he said.

"You'd risk it!" she echoed, in scorn and astonishment.

"Why not? What's to be afraid of? Say, I had the strangest dream last night."

"You, too, dreaming! Spare me."

"Why, I don't dream once in a month's time, and when I do I take bearin's by it. This was so queer I can feel it now. There was a great sweep o' country—not the sea—and the wind was blowin'."

THE SMILING CLOCK

"The wind blowing in a dream?"

"Aye, that was the queer part of it—a great sweep o' country, strange and beautiful-like, and the wind in the trees—I heard it—and it blew on my face—I felt it—and as I breathed it in—"

"Well?"

"I thought how I loved you, but—"

"But what?" she asked sharply of his hesitation.

"You couldn't tell unless you'd been there, Margaret. I wasn't forgetting folks, I was holding of them closer, but somehow the fret and fear was all gone out of it. 'Twas a great sweep o' country, and I was happy—I don't remember why—but I was happy beyond all accounting—and the wind blew."

"'Twas a pretty dream," she said. The aloofness of his vision from mortal stress drew her to him.

"Hold my hand," she said, in a low, sweet, imperative tone. He flushed with a very human joy at this little show of dependence.

"It took away fret and fear, Margaret. Oh, you'll be stronger. I sha'n't let you work as the Bar women do—there'll be a woman to help you—but there'll be many a care you'll love, I guess—and children, maybe, with your face and brains—think of the joy of it!—that I'll work to have better educated than I was."

She did not lift her eyes to his for a moment; when she did they burned with a despair that sacrificed all things, even his infinite trust, on the altar of their flaming unbelief.

"My—poor—fool," she said, letting her hand lie still in his; "let me read to you the whole interpretation of your hope. Poverty—misery. Poverty—misery. Poverty—misery. I am not young enough or strong enough to plunge with you into any chimera.

FLOOD-TIDE

In fact, as far as any serious relationship between us is concerned, I have decided to say 'Good-bye' to you, forever."

The simple fellow had been through this scene with her before. Some premonition or some weariness over the fruitless struggle made him silent in their parting, though with a constant manner. The world seemed empty as he turned from her.

"She told me once to come to her when I suffered," he mused, with a white smile; "but I'll not go to her to trouble her." He had loved the acme of his keenest imagination of what was good and true, and he loved too greatly for the element of reason to enter into any appraisal of his idol. Some unworthiness lay in him, he concluded.

But the world was empty. It was different from the love for some fresh-faced maid, this where the intellect had been touched as a door to unknown worlds, the spiritual life with a sense of that which is sheltering and eternal. It was—so purely had love enlightened his imagination—like losing some revealed element of God, a loss that sank the heart to death, heavy and incomprehensible.

"If it hadn't been for that dream," he said, "I couldn't take any interest in living—but I've seen that sweep o' country, and felt that wind on my face ever since."

XXX

“HER VOICE WILL NEVER LEAVE ME”



'M at a controversy with natur'," said Captain Abram Shale, smiling, as he leaned against the fence, with an empty milk-pail swung on his arm. Earle, with his light, free, jaunty tread, was dancing down the lane to sell a paper of pins.

"Why should a fool walk so smart and git over the ground as ef he was a hummin'-bird, whilst we with brains onrattled—or what's called onrattled—hitches along lookin' out for ditches an' stuns, and oft-times with rheumatiz or sciatiky or some other distressment moanin' in our j'int's?"

Captain Shale's question was great, but his attitude was one of peace, and eternity is competent to all problems.

"Now, Earle there never was known ter stub his toe— Wal', mother, what you racin' down the lane in sech a tew for, with your pucker-struck clo's on? She don't look over twenty-five in them ribbins, does she, Alfred?"

"There's go'n' to be an evenin' meetin' at the school-house, Aberm," said Mrs. Shale, undiverted from the intensity of her mission, "and here you hain't been after the strippin's yet!"

"Wal', mother, ye don't want the strippin's ter pass around in meetin', do ye?"

FLOOD-TIDE

"No, but we want every backslid sinner there, be he saint or be he advent. Things have got to sech a pass here to the Bar, we don't ask no longer 'What be you?' but only 'Come in, whatever ye be.' We want you too, Alfred."

I bowed with a sense of infinite blushes.

"As for you, Aberm, I confess my hope is 't some seed may be dropped on ye. Ye hain't sailed to a conference for ten years, nor stood up under a topic sence ninety-six. As fur as I can see, ye'll have to begin all over ag'in like an infant from whom the deep things is hidden."

"That's all, mother. That's all I begin on, and that's all I ever git to in the end."

"Wal'," said Mrs. Shale, somewhat softened by his modesty, "Dorna Gleeson an' me is app'inted to give warnin' over the Bar"—and she hurried on.

"There comes Dorny, hailin' in from the west'ard," said Captain Shale. That sweet woman approached us with her usual air of candor. "I hope to shake you both by the hands of fellowship at the meetin' this evenin'," she exclaimed. "Please to warn whomsoever you overhaul on the road."

"I sha'n't probably see nobody but the cow," said Captain Abram, gently. "I'll tell her—I'm goin' after the strippin's."

"Whatever the words 't comes out o' your mouth, Uncle Abe, I tell 'em all, an' I stand by it, 't if I ever git to glory I shall see Captain Abram Shale there settin' down on the very front row."

"Don't—don't say that, Dorny. Don't say that. Let me have a place ter pursue my industries off somewheres in the fields; and when I want ter rest, jest let me lean up ag'in' a bowlder or an old

“HER VOICE WILL NEVER LEAVE ME”

Virginny fence, and praise God out where the wind's breezin'."

"Captain Abe, your words strikes a home place in me, and I ain't go'n' to deny it. I've allas said, ef it's the will o' the Lord 't I should set in-doors an' harp, I'll do it; but I make my confessions right here an' now, 't, after I've learned all the tunes, I sh'd like to turn my pail over in a garden somewheres along o' the folks, an' set an' talk an' taste the uncooked fruits o' the 'arth jest as we do now on our way to the spring."

"What's put you in sech a touse for an evenin' meetin', Dorny?"

"Wal', it's leaked out that the clock man was eddicated for the ministry. He says he wa'n't fit for it and has forgot all he learned, but we reckon there's enough of it cleavin' to him to run a meetin' on, here to the Bar, bad off as we be. He's a straight canvasser, anyway. He had a express o' clocks come down by the last mail, and every one 't launched out a dollar an' a half has got a clock 't opens its mouth to every tick right on time. Now I must whip along. Warn all whomsoever ye overhaul on the road, Alfred."

Vaguely mindful of this admonition, I overhauled but two, however, on the lonely shore path home, and they were of a mind unsuitable for the simple warning I had to give. Alpena's perfect face was tragic with young resolve; she looked as though no smile would ever make a baby of her again. Norman Saxe, irresistibly attracted back to the Bar and her, from some cruise he had undertaken, stood in an attitude of arrested pleading that was altogether desperately hopeless.

"Oh, Alfred," said the girl, rushing towards me,

FLOOD-TIDE

"he is a brute! He says the only way to get me is to run away with me!" Alpena had her arm in mine; her uplifted features, expanding in saintly sorrow and dismay, seemed to claim me as the favored guardian of her soul at that present moment.

"You would not want her if you had her, Norman," I said—I had never called him "Norman" before, "she is not worthy of a sensible man like you. If you were going to run away with her, I am glad I happened along in time to save you from such a misadventure."

"I've thought seriously of it," he said, with a bitter smile, "but I had no matured plans, I assure you. I think Miss Marlow would always be safe with me. Alpy," he said, turning to her with a changed tone, "I beg for just a few words more with you."

The girl simply clung to my arm, and turned her back upon him.

"Surely you will speak with him, Alpy?" I said, disgusted at her heartlessness.

"When he can control himself," said the pouting red lips, "I will talk with him; now I am going with you." And she drew me forcibly along the path.

"There's something evil in you women," I said. "God pity you and pity us. Why are you not like *Infra*? She fascinates every one, but the attraction soothes and blesses them. She never drove man nor woman mad. You, and some others I've known, madden people. You are evil, evil, evil."

Alpena lifted grave eyes to me, a question in their sombre depths:

"Do I madden you, Alfred?"

"No, thank God—no!" I met her gaze, and her

“HER VOICE WILL NEVER LEAVE ME”

eyes drooped, her downcast face grew like a child's, her thin fingers clung to my arm.

“I need comfort,” she said, “and I am going to Infra. I am so glad Infra is able to be about again! I missed her so when I could not see her, for sometimes I seem to need just her—Infra.”

I shook the slight hand from my arm.

“Do you never think of taking comfort to some one else?” I said. “You left a good man desperate there by the shore. Mrs. Temple is strangely, constantly anxious about you, and you so seldom go to her now.”

“She is too anxious. It tires me.”

“What of *her*?”

“How much do you think of comforting people? You went to Infra when you hadn't a hope in the world, and now you want her all to yourself. You are jealous if any one else goes near her.”

“Are you two quarrelling?” said my wife at the door, with her smile that welcomed us both and that entertained no serious thought of contention.

“Alfred did not want me to come to see you. He wants you all to himself.”

My wife looked curiously at the girl as she made this accusation with a deeply injured air.

“I am glad you came in spite of him.”

Alpena flashed gloomy triumph at me from her black, black eyes.

“But I am going to be bad, too,” continued Infra, gently. “I am going to send you right away. Mrs. Temple has been here, and she is very strange about you. She fears something—she cannot explain—she only feels safe about you when you are near her. She has that feeling, and she suffers so that I would—I would keep near her, Alpy.”

"Pooh! I like her best when she is not so nervous."

"She thinks for you, Alpy Marlow, unselfishly. When people love that way, somehow it's never wasted. People always want a love like that—and come back for it, sooner or later."

"Then why don't you love me that way?" pouted Alpena.

"So I shall, always. I'm thinking now of Mrs. Temple's needs."

"*You* never need any one. If—if your baby should die, you'd be just the same."

Infra's face sharpened for a moment. She put up a firm hand to steady herself. Alpy was looking away unconscious of the other's hurt, her strangely beautiful face wondering and querulous.

"Yes, I should be the same, but I don't think you know why yet, Alpy," said my wife, bending to the girl intently, a vast compassion in her eyes; "remember, you do not know why yet. Try and learn why. Life's for giving—still giving, when our hearts break—not for keeping. I want you to go and be loving and kind to Mrs. Temple as you used to be."

"I'll go because you ask me," said Alpena.

"There's a meeting at the school-house, Alpy," I said. "Aunt Sylphy and Dorna asked me to warn whomsoever I met."

"Oh, a meeting!" The girl, at the prospect of even so much social excitement, danced with a light step across the floor. "Look at the sky, Infra. What a strange color over there! I wish I had a dress of that color—a silk dress, sheeny and long."

"It would have to be long," I said.

Both ladies giggled, but the tall Alpena modified

“HER VOICE WILL NEVER LEAVE ME”

my triumph by giving me no farewell as she walked away.

“You are not going!” I exclaimed to Infra, later, as she was putting on her cloak and hat.

“Yes, I am going to help them sing again.”

“Ah, no! Let us stay in our own home to-night, Infra. Stay and sing to me.”

“You used to say the rest liked to hear me,” said my wife, demurely, arranging her hat before the mirror.

“I guess Alpy was right. I am as selfish as she is. But you are not strong yet.”

“That is one reason why I want to go and sing with the rest—for the strength that returned so soon to me, and for—”

She drew me to the room where our child lay sleeping. I see still the look that was in her eyes then, not the mere mother-look of possession, but the saint’s strong fearlessness, fearlessness of losing, the rapt knowledge that there could be no losing.

“My own, you are the only healthy being I ever knew,” I said, marvelling, as we walked on together.

“I mean not only health of body, but health of mind, health of soul. Where did you get it? Where did you get your way of treating the nurse and the kitchen-maid? It is as firm and gentle as if you had had a retinue at your bidding all your life long.”

“Is there more than one way of treating people, Alfred?”

“Why, yes; there is a way out in the world of treating the poor with insult more or less and the rich with sycophancy, but you do not know that and you walk everywhere queenly. I believe on my soul you would meet an actual queen as only another human soul needing perhaps your sympathy and support. It is the divine first health. Health!”

FLOOD-TIDE

I lifted her face with my two hands. "Why has God been so good to me?" I said. "I am happy—happy—happy in you!" I held her face upward and kissed her sweet lips.

A vainly suppressed giggle came choking from the bushes. I drew out Johnny Bowles, covered with confusion, not at being caught—no, his blushes were solely on my account.

"We was goin' to scare you with the Jack-o'-lantern," he explained, "but you begun—te he!—to make up to Mis' Cap'n Alfred an' didn't look at no Jack-o'-lantern."

"Dinsmore!" I called.

Dinny came forth, holding a young pumpkin pierced with ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, and fiercely illuminated. For himself, he wore a leer and faced us stanchly.

"I didn't know 't ol' married folks had ter keep on co'tin' arfter they be'n housekeepin' an' got a baby," said he, and both he and Everywheres yielded perforce to another snort of contemptuous merriement.

Infra took Dinsmore's wretched little black hand into her own. He blew out the lantern as meekly as if she had uttered some word of command, though she had not spoken. Everywheres came naturally and took her other hand, so that I was relegated to the rear.

Alpena smiled happily at my dilemma as we entered the school-house. She sat on a form beside Mrs. Temple, ignoring the look of weary, gentle suspense that had been of late on the elder woman's face; ignoring, too, Norman Saxe's changed expression where he sat indifferently at the edge of the "Devil's Corner."

"HER VOICE WILL NEVER LEAVE ME"

I was surprised to see the unusual number in attendance; but Margaret Langthorne was not there.

Dunbar, idly seeking amusement, stood leaning against the door. Captain Shale, with smothered pipe, sat on the step.

Bayruck, "the wicked," sat smiling good-naturedly in the very centre of the Devil's Corner, the "wreck" near him, as to one who had proved a spar on a benighted sea. Earle had gone in there, too, unwittingly, though with the air of ostentation he always wore when travestied in the checked raiment. When Arch came in, however, haggard of face and with restless, deep-sunken eyes, and sat down there, a murmur went through the room, for Arch was a professed saint, and this was an act of despair; so that many sighed and Ziba Skank rose admonishingly.

"When we get hold o' a good thing we want ter keep it," said he. "Now I'm happy to tell you all that I've got hold o' a good thing"—his hand, as he spoke, was nervously grasping some object in his pocket.

"An' I know jest what 'tis ye've got hold of, Zebe," said Bayruck, in a low, cheerful tone; "it's yer plug o' tobackker." The wild boys surrounding the group in the corner laughed aloud.

Bayruck rose. "I 'ain't no right to speak in this meetin', nor in ary meetin'," he said, "but no kind o' ship 't sails is any worse for bein' steered a bit, an' jest as an outsider, 't ain't got no right in 'er, I want to help shove this meetin' off'n the mud flats an' git her out to the breeze. I want ter ask, what I know every soul in this room is hankerin' after, that Mis' Cap'n Alfred 'll sing, and that she'll sing with her voice all alone by itself, and that she'll sing 'I'm not afeared.'"

The "wicked man" looked straight across at

FLOOD-TIDE

Infra as he sat down. His expression was gentle, and there was a tear in his bright eye.

My wife seemed conscious in only an impersonal way of the faces turned to her, as if they said, "Here is a beautiful gift—not yours—but only loaned you for sweet using. Give us of it." And she rose meekly to obey. She trembled a little, for indeed she was not quite strong yet, and she had seen the pain in Arch's eyes and his reckless act. I went with her to the organ.

And then again, as in the old days, her voice swelling there changed our restlessness into a prayer and the prayer's deep answer, wherein the tossed soul sees God and falls on rest.

" Storm-tossed, alone, in starless night,
I'm not afraid!
With lost hope drifting from my sight—
I'm not afraid!
I'm not afraid!
Through sorrow and through mystery
My Pilot calls o'er life's dark sea.
I'll follow on—
I'm not afraid!

" Somewhere the dawn shall rise for me,
I'm not afraid!
Sometime in God's light, I shall see—"

That disembodied voice seemed to plead with Arch. He gave a harsh sob and buried his face in his hands.

"Come along up there, where ye belong, Arch," whispered Bayruck, huskily, and dragged him forward. "I'll stay here with ye. If nobody's any objections," he said aloud, "I'll make the beginnin's right here o' bein' a saint." The "wreck" and the "fool" stuck stupidly to his side. "Set down here," he said; "the's room for us all."

“HER VOICE WILL NEVER LEAVE ME”

The Bar meeting had never witnessed such a sight, and Infra's voice with its answered prayer sang on, as they sing who know not that they ravish divinely, being lost in love.

The clock-man came from the chair where Dorna had placed him, and stood beside Bayruck and the “wreck.” “You say there's room for all here,” he said. His face was luminous; the soul seemed to have sped out of him to his eyes and lips, and to hover there incurious and absorbingly communicant.

“I think that woman's voice will never leave me,” he said. “I do not know who she is—but she has led me by a strain that will never leave me.

“I was reared amid the surroundings of wealth and educated for the church, but I was conscious that I had learned too little.

“Since I have been out in the world trying to earn a living, since I lost the thing I wanted most in the world, since I've had my share in the common lot of poverty, struggle, and disappointment, I am learning a little—a little—of what it must mean to be a minister of Christ.

“It means strange things. It means the giving up of all, and I've not done that; but I think that woman's voice will never leave me.

“The giving-up does not seem to mean sorrow. Your singer's face has peace.

“They call Christ the Man of Sorrows. I do not see how that could be. He must have been, in the depths of His soul, the most joyful being that ever lived. To *know* as He knew! To heal by the outstretched hand! To still the very waves! To see! To know! To have so confident a purpose! Think!—what would be the ills of this little life if only we could *know*!

FLOOD-TIDE

"It is the loss of faith that ditches us with our burdens. We stand in the dark weighing them—their source—their meaning. We lose life, which is for pressing on, in the deepest sense, burdenless. I think your singer's voice will never leave me.

"I refuse to bear mine longer. God, who understands, must answer for them. If there's a weaker hand by the way, I'll take it in mine. If there's poverty deeper than mine, I'll give my little to relieve it. My health shall be for those who pine, my courage for those who faint—but the burdens back there in the dark—not understood—I'll not weigh them longer. Perhaps sometime, as she sang, I shall see. I know that I shall see! Her voice will never leave me."

Bayruck laid his hand on the young man's shoulder; his head was bowed.

"The' ain't no elder here," he said. "Ye've been in the church in a kind of a way. Won't ye start me out on bein' a saint?"

"The Great High Priest of all has touched you," said the other. "Never fear."

The tongues, often so voluble in that little room, were silent; there was weeping, and under a strange spell the group disbanded.

"His countenance changed," said Captain Shale, as we passed out, Infra's hand on my arm. The old man's pipe was put clean out of sight and his voice trembled. "Did ye mind? His countenance changed."

XXXI

AUNT NAG'S DUCK



F it had been anybody but Aunt Nag's duck," said Dorna, "I could stand up in the middle o' the situation and face it square to the front; but you all know what makin' settlements with Aunt Nag is."

"What was ye a-doin' of, Dinsmore?" said a voice anxious to hear the remarkable incident repeated.

"I was down by the cove lettin' ding at the ducks, an' this one par'lyzed."

"What was you a-lettin' ding with?"

"Rocks."

"Wal'," said the listener, mildly, "mebby if you was a-lettin' ding with rocks jest the time Aunt Nag's duck par'lyzed, then mebby, old as she was, Aunt Nag's duck didn't keel over an' par'lyze jest that minute out er old age."

"Dinsmore has not denied," said Dorna, putting her arm around her son—her stanch attitude since the accident—"but what the duck was tunked. But what did he do? Did he run off and never say nothin', in which case nothin' would ever been known? No! He come a-draggin' of the carkiss home to me, a-cryin' louder 'n ever Rachel or Rahab pitched their voices at.

"So I fostered him with my arm, same as I'm

FLOOD-TIDE

a-fosterin' of him now, and ever shall do, and together we took the carkiss over to Aunt Nag's an' never flinched, but held it up full len'th afore her very eyes. 'Dinsmore was down to the cove lettin' ding at my ducks,' says I, 'an' the rock slipped an' tunked your duck. But ef you'll come over an' selec' ary duck you wish, be he duck or be he drake, out er my flock, it's yourn. Or I'll pay you here an' now the reg'lar price o' a duck, which has been twenty-five cents, old or young, big or small, dead or livin', sence time first was,' says I."

"What did she say?"

"She said money hadn't no attractions to her alongside o' her duck, an' ter take the remains back home with us—it was a case for a co't."

"How we goin' to have a court here to the Bar?"

"I don' know," said Dorna, sadly; "my only regrets is that I hadn't 'a' hove it in her face."

Though she spoke thus boldly, Dorna was desperately worn with her travails over the dead duck; and still desiring to face all emergencies rather than to fly from them, yet the intimation of a court, as an unknown quantity, mysteriously oppressed her. She held the lifeless form in question suspended by the legs; its head, trailed over much territory by this time, still maintained a general expression of indifference to earthly vicissitudes and of absolute content at its release therefrom.

"Aunt Nag says her father was a jedge, and in case where any objec's been tunked, the body haves to be kep' by the crim'nal till the co't assembles. I'm go'n' to find out ef that's so, and, ef it is, the's go'n' to be a co't here to the Bar inside o' two hours. Dinsmore and me has hauled this old carkiss everywhere we been sence the accident, and I'd rather

AUNT NAG'S DUCK

face my verdick than take out any furdur contract on the job."

Dorna shifted the duck to her other aching hand and sighed.

"Ef we drop it down a minute the coon gets at it, an' ef we shet it up the mice is possessed. Every neighbor's house I been to I have to go luggin' this carkiss, an' when Mis' Beam's rusticator came in this mornin' I had ter meet her at the door an' set down in the parlor with her a-hangin' on to this old rut o' feathers as ef it was a clover bunch! But time's up, jedge or no jedge, an' somethin's go'n' to be done."

"Woman," said Grandpa Gleeson, from the edge of the group, "where's your suttility? Aunt Nag was mistakened. I be'n jestice o' the peace over this deestricth thirty year, an' know all the rules o' 'cappit mortar.'"

"Wal', Pa Gleeson, here's the duck, and the finer the mortar you make out of 'er, the better I'll be pleased."

The old man gave a compassionating laugh.

"Afore you can go off free, woman, an' legality be satisfied, we here assembled shall have to set over the body."

"I've done everything 'ith this old duck *except* set on 'er," said Dorna, almost in a tearful tone; "ef that's required, I can do it, though my in'ard feelin's to'ds this old carkiss is to let it go in peace."

"To set, woman, as a cor'ner's jury."

"Ef I'd known all it needed was cornin'," continued the vicarious culprit, earnestly, "I could 'a' done that long ago, an' welcome."

"Let the women now keep silence!" exclaimed Grandpa Gleeson, wisdom glittering so severely

FLOOD-TIDE

from his eye that we there present fled metaphorically to the arms of this sage of jurisprudence. "Dinsmore Gleeson, as the pris'ner afore the bar, I summons you to hold up the defunk in full view o' the co't."

"Ef you mean the duck by that sickenin' name," said Dorna, "the' ain't a soul here but what's pawed it all over a'ready, and knows it's Aunt Nag's old duck 't lost an eye two years ago by comin' in shore under Flat Rock an' gettin' into a fight with Tim's coon. Furdermore Dinsmore Gleeson ain't nothin' to do with the duck, dead or alive. The whole responsibility o' killin' the duck lies on me, an' here I stand forever upholdin' and confessin' to the same."

"Sho! Dorny," said the judge, "ye hadn't no more to do with the demittance o' that duck 'n I had. Now be keerful—be keerful—or I shall have to commit ye for contemp'."

"All the contemp' on the Bar," replied Dorna, "and scorn as ever was, and flat oars poundin' on my back, can't move me from the platform where I now stand, Pa Gleeson, and that you know full well!"

Dorna was beautiful. I love to think of her as she stood towering there with one arm around Dinsmore, the other fearlessly upholding the duck. All her tremors had vanished, and neither firebrands nor thunderbolts could have moved her from the defence of her son.

"Wal', wal', all I want ye to do, Dorny," sighed Grandpa Gleeson, conciliatingly, "is jest to let me pilot this co't along to a verdick. In course ye know I shouldn't let no harm come to little son. I'd had ye both akitted an' clean red o' the duck by this time ef ye could 'a' kep' yer clack still an' let me 'judicate.

AUNT NAG'S DUCK

"Gentlemen o' the jury, I opine that this duck, havin' a predestination to heart disease—"

"Pa Gleeson," cried Dorna, firmly, "when I clear my skirts by lyin', I shall stand more in fear o' death than I do this minit! Aunt Nag's old duck didn't die o' no heart disease—it didn't have no heart anyway; for anythin' made in the peaceable form of a duck, it was a fightin' old crittur', and it died o' bein' tunked in the head. I give you plain words; now le's hear your verdick!"

"Woman, woman," said grandpa, testily, "for a time an' a time an' a beginnin' o' times, we rest under the dispensation o' 'arthly law, and this law you hain't no more knowledge of than a herrin' has of a glue-shop. Silence! while the court 'judicates.

"Havin' a predestination to heart disease, received a shock from a stun 't slipped by clear sheer accident—"

"No sech a thing! Dinsmore was a-dingin' at them ducks."

"Clear sheer accident from the hand o' Dinny Gleeson, which heeled it over on that final eend which was already approachin'. The duty o' the court pernounces the verdick heart disease. Now, han' me over that duck!"

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen," said Dorna, with a deep gasp of relief as she delivered up the subject, "and in placin' that carkiss in your hands, Pa Gleeson, I feel myself in the situation o' old John Buntin's Pilgrim's Progress, when his harissments rolled off'n him inter the ditch. But as for your opinions on the law," she added, with righteous scorn to him whose sinuous and painful labors had just acquitted her, "to say truth, I despise 'em, an' I shouldn't want

FLOOD-TIDE

the last trump to sound an' find me hangin' on to no sech legalities as them!"

Grandpa Gleeson, quite undismayed, toddled off with the duck. Dorna and Dinsmore stood like lovers with arms entwined.

"Say, ma," said Dinny, beguilingly, "can I go an' harness up the steer in a trace-yoke?"

"Yes, darlin', you may," said Dorna. "You've been a-steppin' on nettles for the last sixteen hours, an' it's no more 'n right 't you should have a season o' peace an' contentment a-breakin' in yer steer. An' ef you run afoul o' Aunt Nag an' she threatens ye with a co't, tell her it's all over an' the co't has set; but don't add nothin' sassy to them final words."

Dinsmore, with smothered insolence in every thinning spear of his fur cap, sped away.

"You're a-handlin' that boy with too easy a rope, Dorny," said one.

"He's one o' this kind 't won't take shape from no handlin',' affirmed Dorna; "he's got to grow up slow by the processes of elocution. Ef I should hire a private tutor for Dinsmore Gleeson, the first schoolin' 't took place between 'em 'u'd have to be to show 't Dinsmore knew more 'n what the tutor did; then they could go on to some other branches."

We sighed acquiescence.

"Bad readin', for one thing, has been a-corruptin' of him lately," said Dorna, sadly. "A rusticator left him a pile o' magazines, *Harpins* an' *Scribblins* an' *Centurions*, that she said was high-class readin', an' I gave Dinsmore free excess to 'em. I seen him a-hangin' on to 'em hour by hour an' his eye a-glitterin', an' when he went off ter take a swim I investigated into 'em myself. Wal', the results was that I took 'em all down an' hove 'em into the cove. O' course,

AUNT NAG'S DUCK

we folks livin' alongshore expects to hear a tough yarn now an' then, but we don't calkulate to swaller 'em tougher 'n what mortal stummick 'll allow. Salt water is the best condiment for sech yarns as them, and they're a-restin' in it down there ten foot deep."

Having thus sadly and with no rancor pronounced the obsequies of modern journalism, Dorna rose to a lighter tone:

"I been punishin' out a dreadful time sence the accident, an' I don't mind sayin' 't I should like a little game o' some kind myself—so be as it's gentle—not sech as 'throwin' water.' Afore I was married I could throw water along o' the best, but sence I been a-raisin' up Dinsmore in this world o' harissments my games haves to be of such a nature as has come in sence the Christian era."

"Dinny's used most o' yer croquet-wickets a-settin' out moose traps," said the voice of Johnny Bowles.

"I got wickets 't neither you nor Dinsmore knows about," said Dorna, regarding him with dreamy contemplation. "Where you been, little Everywheres? By your looks you been a-jauntin' at a livelier rate 'n what you usually jaunts at, an' the's one thing sure," she added, reverting compassionately to the general bankruptcy of his attire, "the worst enemy you got couldn't call you pucker-struck."

"I been over to the Reach. Dr. Marg'et's dyin' sick 'ith a fever."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen!"

"I heard 't she'd been in slender health lately," said another.

"She never did have no r'al buskom healthy look to her," interposed a third.

FLOOD-TIDE

"Arch is a-settin' on the door-step over to the Reach, a-holtin' his head in his hands, like this," continued Everywheres, indicating that he had not yet revealed the inmost of his secrets, and grasping his white locks with his grimy paws.

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen!"

"An' she's a-moanin' for Cap'n Alfred's wife, an' a-callin' an' a-moanin' all the time for Cap'n Alfred's wife; an' I stopped an' told Cap'n Alfred's wife on the way how Dr. Marg'et was dyin' sick 'ith a fever an' a-moanin' for her."

"You little wretch," I cried, sharply, "why cannot you mind your own business?" and I turned homeward.

"Alfred," called Dorna, "tell Infra I'm a-goin' in her place."

"She don't want ye," piped up Everywheres, hastily; "the's women enough there. She wants Mis' Cap'n Alfred."

"Alfred!" called Dorna, solemnly, "I know the tumults in your heart, but in your dealin's with Infra on this subjec', don't forget 't you're—both—saints. And for your comfort I remind ye 't Infra's strong as ever again."

"Have the saints *no* duties to themselves?" I answered her, with a harsh laugh.

"When a soul is a-moanin' and a-callin' to 'em, I never heard—I don't know, but I never heard," said Dorna with simple literalness, "of their stoppin' to consider ary duty to theirselves."

My wife met me in the path. "You must sail me over to the Reach," she said.

I plead with her like the lover I was, like husband, like child.

"And you must help me," she said, catching her

AUNT NAG'S DUCK

breath at last sharply—and all the while her hand was leading me to the beach.

“Curse her!” I muttered. “Curse Margaret Langthorne! She is bound to come into my life everywhere as its misfortune and bane”—still, I was sailing the boat towards the Reach, my head sunk on my breast. Infra’s face was sad for a space, set thoughtfully towards the farther shore, as though she had been alone in the boat. Then she reached over and put her hand on mine, and I understood and drank in eagerly again the strange eternal faith in her eyes, realizing only that I was near her and content.

“I will wait for you here,” I said, as I landed the boat.

“No, Alfred. Arch will sail me home, when I can go. You will help me more not to wait.”

“I can be patient.”

“Not very—not yet,” said my wife, the old happy smile playing on her lips. “You would be coming to the cottage in a few moments’ time and ordering me away.” But she, from the sweetness and greatness of her soul, leaned upon me in parting as though relying on a great strength and patience which I had not yet shown the world!

XXXII

LOOKING AT OURSELVES ON THE TREE



I TOOK a look at my sleeping son, but what my heart was really conscious of was that my hand rested on a dressing-gown of Infra's that lay over the back of a chair. It was one of the things I had imported for her, and, as I stood clasping it, I saw only her face, her warm white throat rising out of the soft fur.

"Don't think that he's always sleeping," said the nurse; "he has a fine clear pipe in his little whistle."

"I've heard him. He looks like his mother."

"Yes, he do, thank God. Not," the woman added, with a high, apologetic blush, "that there's anything ag'in' your looks, sir. But Mis' Cap'n Alfred do be not only healthy looking, but she have that ca'm face to her, without no discontent puckerin' it."

"I'm sure I've seen the baby's face a good deal puckered."

"He hasn't got up to his mother's statute yet," said the woman, smilingly.

His mother's stature, gracious and strong. My wife's physical presence had grown to hold me with a spell which she, brave soul, would have resisted for my sake. Even in the room where she was not, I realized only the sweep of her garments, her laugh,

LOOKING AT OURSELVES ON THE TREE

the wealth of her instinctive, unconscious dignity. The child did not live through her—breathe through her—as I did.

My restless eyes and the “pucker” in my brow, tossed back at me from the mirror, recalled me to the fact that I could not reach out and touch her whom I loved. I wandered out of the house. The sound of ardent voices was borne to me from the direction of Dorna’s cottage, with the occasional sharp speeding of a croquet-ball.

“I don’t want yer money, Dorny Gleeson. I want my duck.”

“The co’t has set, Aunt Nag,” said Dorna, firmly. “I toted that old defunk around with me accordin’ to your rules, until Pa Gleeson assembled a co’t and delivered me of it.”

“I ask ye, where’s my duck?”

“Jedge Gleeson,” said Dorna, with hot dignity, “took it along home with him, an’ if the’s any attempts to make a stew o’ that duck, you know as well as I, Aunt Nag, it ’ll have to be b’iled more ’n a time an’ a time an’ a beginnin’ o’ times!”

Aunt Nag proceeded on her way determinedly.

“I’ve always heard,” said Dorna, vainly attempting to deal a box at the ear of the learned pig, who had snouted her croquet-ball off into the mazes of the barley-patch, “’t when you once get into the legalities o’ the law, the’s no end to the harissments. But Aunt Nag’s affections over that duck is jest *put on*, for it wa’n’t no kind o’ society for her. It never went near her house. It conditioned along o’ my ducks, and it’s been fed along o’ my ducks sence time first was. I got to go into the barley,” she continued, still bravely flaunting in the face of this sea of untoward events, “on a search ’t’s likely to

FLOOD-TIDE

last me into the dark o' the moon; but you that still has balls, let the game go on."

The fortunate number appealed to, owing to the officiousness of the learned pig, had reached a penurious limit.

"I've told Dorna ag'in an' ag'in," said Tilly, drying in the grass a spheroid which she had recovered from some mire in the distance, "'t I can't come here to croquet with her unless 't she'll have a button put on the pig's door."

"Is it my turn?" cried Mrs. Temple, who had condescended with sweet joviality to join in this mucky game—jovial, for Alpena was sitting on the doorsteps near, and the woman was light of heart when the girl was in sight.

"No," said Fyryards, "it's Tilly's nex' blow, after she gets her globe lightened o' the sile so 't it can roll."

This accomplished, however, the pig intercepted it and tucked it under the piazza; there, behind the lattice work, he toyed with it immune from human reach.

"You an' me seems to be standin' out alone, Mis' Temple," said Captain Fyryards, with his most insinuating courtliness of manner.

"Oh, mamma, you're blushing," said Alpena, through a teasing parting of the lips, and giving to Mrs. Temple, with mirthful intent, the fond name that came always with a pang of bliss or of anguish to the older woman's heart.

Mrs. Temple blushed more deeply, shaken at the same time with the music of her own low laughter, adjusted her eye-glasses, and seized the mallet firmly.

"Wait," said Fyryards; "ye needn't blow from over there behind the stump. Yer globe sets there,

LOOKING AT OURSELVES ON THE TREE

an' it's the rules, I know; but you an' me standin' out here alone, I kin give ye all the privileges I like," and he gallantly seized the ball and set it on the summit of the obstacle; "now draw off an' swing yer hammmer an' take jest as fur a fly as ye kin!"

"You have to be petted, mamma. Pooh! you have to be petted!" cried Alpena.

"I require a great deal of indulgence and mercy, I know," said the good lady, drawing off and swinging strictly in the manner prescribed by her playfellow.

"It's gone into the cellar, old lady! Your ball's gone down through the hole into the cellar!" shouted Alpena. "Oh, you're skunked! you're skunked! Go over and look at yourself on the tree!"

For tally of all games was kept on the solemn pine-tree near by, defeat indicated by a cross carved in its flesh, and the only resort of the vanquished was to "go over and look at himself on the tree."

"I know, I know," said Mrs. Temple, rather breathlessly. "Captain Fyryards, will you go over and mark a cross for me?"

"No'm, I won't," said he, with devoted ardor; "but I'll go down into the cellar and search for yer globe an' give ye another chance."

"Pray don't!" she entreated.

"Flirting with a married man! Flirting with a married man!" sang Alpena.

"Hush, darling—"

"Flirting with a married man!"

Captain Fyryards, putting his head out of the cellar window, heard the refrain and gave a timid glance at Mrs. Temple as conveying a conscience-stricken sense of their mutual delinquency. But he had also an item of news to convey from his subterranean researches.

FLOOD-TIDE

"Tilly, hain't Dorna missed her speckled hen lately?"

"She has."

"It's down in the dry well; the globe fell in there and set it cackling. Ye better run and fetch Dorna out er the barley."

Dorna came to this new perplexity armed with a clothes-line and a bearing feverishly haughty. "I can see the finger o' Providence pointin' at me jest as plain as the nose on my face," she said, making a lasso of her line and letting it down into the well; "time an' ag'in Aunt Nag has been at me to sell her my speckled hen, and I denied her. Now ef I can haul her up out er the well Aunt Nag shall have her, co't or no co't, to offset ag'in' her old defunk."

Fyryards and I offered to wield the plummet line, but Dorna refused our aid. "This is a work requiring patience," she explained; "and we all know when the Lord created us male an' female which side He hove the patience on to. You fightin' old fool of a mollisk from the shores o' the Dead Sea!" she continued, with clearly testy unction, to the screeching victim in the well, "ef you had a brain in your head the size o' nothin' at all, you'd step inter this here contraption 't I've sent down to ye for your salvation."

We as an audience were attentive. Alpena stood leaning upon Mrs. Temple, who with some effort maintained a constant attitude of respect for the gravity of Dorna's emotions, in spite of the girl's mischievous whisperings.

"I know your harissments," Dorna appealed to the hen, in a more reasonable tone, "for I often feel myself to be in jest sech a state and jest sech a pickle as what you're a-fussin' in. We can

LOOKING AT OURSELVES ON THE TREE

fly down further an' easier 'n what we can fly up, all of us."

"That would make a good topic," I suggested, appreciatively. "'We can fly down further and easier than we can fly up.'"

"We got more topics already than what we're willin' to stand up an' face. Plenty o' good topics is droppin' all around us, and the whole Bar a-dodg-in' of 'em as ef they was hot coals. Why can't you stop your clack down there, you worl'-weary prodigal, and let me slip this line over ye? I never see anythin' so set an' determined ag'in' salvation!"

"Perhaps she heard ye say ye was goin' to give her to Aunt Nag," said Fyryards, demurely.

"Aunt Nag's a good creetur'. To be sure, she has her ways; so has you, Captain Fyryards; so has Alfred. Mis' Temple has her ways, though the's nothin' displeasin' in 'em. Alpy, she has her ways, and the least said about 'em the better. I, too, has my ways— You squawkin' old mummy from Pharo's bulrushes, ef I once get this string around ye, I'll haul ye up into the light o' day so quick ye'll never know what happened!"

To Dorna's own delight and dismay the hen yielded to this last injunction, and came up entwined by the neck, with white, vague eyes and a generally comatose appearance.

"Don't you go to puttin' on no funeral plumes!" said Dorna, with virile sarcasm. "I know your tribe. You ain't no more dead 'n a cat." Carrying the limp form by the feet with a triumphant swing, she slipped it under a convenient coop, where it proceeded forthwith to strut about and cackle vain-gloriously.

FLOOD-TIDE

"Why," said Mrs. Temple, palely—"why could not the duck come to life?"

"It didn't have no desires to make the effort," said Dorna, with reminiscent reproach; "but the first chance it got to defunk, off it went, no matter who got the blame."

"Be you really go'n' to give Aunt Nag your speckled hen, Dorna?" said Tilly.

"I be. When Providence an' me once plants our foot down on an agreement, that's the end of it, and nary one nor the other of us was ever known to make back-tracks. The hen's in the coop ready for Aunt Nag, and I'm layin' for her myself ag'in' she comes down the lane from Pa Gleeson's."

"Shall I go hunt up a ladder somewheres over the Bar and go down inter the well after yer globe, Mis' Temple?" said Fyryards, to the amaze of the bystanders, that one of a class usually so inert by land should suggest measures of so painful a degree of courtesy.

"Pray, don't!" she entreated.

But Dorna gave him a straight and steady look. "Frisbie Fyryards," said she, "ef you hadn't had the measles when you was young I should say you was comin' down with 'em."

We all blushed.

"It seems to be the mind o' Providence," continued our voiceful leader, "'t I should stand right up an' meet my harissments plumb in the face without no thought o' playin' games, and I'm goin' to show my resignation to it by goin' over and markin' myself on the tree."

The pine breathed omnipotent balm for our defeat, and we were comforted. Cross after cross marked its stalwart flesh, crosses of old time and crosses

LOOKING AT OURSELVES ON THE TREE

freshly made, and still it breathed hope, its topmost branches pointing towards the great sea gateway, convenient to wide waters and to many shores. In every way it served for comfort: knowing the fondness of the Bar for leaning upon something by land, it offered one low storm-beaten branch for this purpose, and we leaned and were content.

"After all," sighed Dorna, deliciously, "I care less 'n' less about games as the years go by."

Fyryards made one effort to renew drawing-room courtesies with Mrs. Temple, who, he had heard, had been in Washington.

"I s'pose they're at the same old tricks in Congress," he inquired, with elegant blitheness, "throwin' books an' spittin' in one another's faces?"

But before the conspicuous traveller could reply, Dorna interposed. "Ef any of you sees Aunt Nag comin' down the lane, I want you to sing out. After all, the's bigger fools 'n Aunt Nag; an' she's fairly beset at the present time, they say, by a rusticater from New York, 't's stoppin' by her for two weeks, an' he keeps so many lager-beer bottles coolin' in her well she can't git her bucket down to fetch no water."

A grievous sigh went around.

"I don't know what 'u'd happen to my gullet," said Tilly, "ef I couldn't have a fresh catarac' o' water pourin' down it once in every hour o' the day. And I want good, bracin' *water*—I don't want it messed-up and flattened out with none o' these bottled impurities. They say Tyr'lese Dunbar has wines brought him in that fancy vessel Dave Marlow runs for him—and Dave himself is gittin' worse 'n' worse, ain't he, Alpy?"

"I don't know," said Alpy, haughtily and brusquely.

FLOOD-TIDE

"Tyr'lese maintains 't you're the strikin'est beauty 't about ever was, and the Bar has allas thought so, but when he goes to runnin' down other folks, jest because they ain't on the lanky pattern, he goes too fur. He told Lowe 't Dorna and Infra and Mis' Temple was nothin' but great, slouchy, big-waisted countrywomen; 't no wonder their faces was fresh, they breathed up all the air the' was to be han'some in."

"An' I calk'late to git my share o' the air," declared Dorna in a flame, "whether Tyr'lese Dunbar thinks I'm slim-waisted or not!"

"I'm sure," said Tilly, "I never see a face that people kep' a-lookin' at and a-hankerin' to draw closter an' closter to, as they do to Mis' Cap'n Alfred's."

"I think," said Fyryards, mildly—"I think—ahem!—that Mis' Temple's a very han'some wom—"

"Frisbie Fyryards," said Dorna, turning upon him righteously, "ef you're sick, you better break off, where you be, an' go home." But just at this point our attention was diverted from the captain's mortification and disgrace by an appalling hubbub in the lane. It was Dinny's runaway steer, advancing madly and dragging after him a complete suite of door-steps, raking and pommelling the earth with a thunderous sound.

In the opposite direction, Aunt Nag was laboriously approaching, bearing a steaming kettle. She escaped confusion by an agile détour from the highway, which she consigned wholly to the steer; but she had recognized her own door-steps, and as she met us her eyes were ominous with contempt and wrath.

Dinsmore, too horror-stricken for tears, came pant-

LOOKING AT OURSELVES ON THE TREE

ing from the same direction as the runaway, and was caught in his mother's arms and supported as in the face of death by that pale heroine.

"The next co't that's held here to the Bar," said Aunt Nag, "*I shall set on, myself!*"

"I sha'n't blame you for so doing," said Dorna, with white and almost tearful earnestness. "The verdick on the defunk, Aunt Nag — though it was all right accordin' to legalities—is a gnawin' worm to them that goes by their conscience, and I'm goin' to disemburse you by all ways in my power, but you got to let alone o' Dinsmore."

"Say, ma," said the latter, to whom speech had come through his mother's embrace, "we clam' down off the Upper Point to git a few mussels, an' we hitched the steer to Aunt Nag's door-steps, 'cause there ain't no house *but* Aunt Nag's to the Upper Point, and he was like a lamb when we left him."

"The lambness of a steer," said Dorna, sadly, "is like Sodom an' Gomorrer to all them that puts their trust therein; their calkulations is almost cert'in to get stepped on. Be you tellin' me the truth, Dinsmore? Boys sometimes has a different story at each end o' the route."

"Yes, ma, I be."

"And wa'n't there nothin' on the wide scroll o' the firmament 't you could hitch your steer on to but Aunt Nag's door-steps?"

"The' ain't nothin' else to the Upper Point."

"And what — with east, north, south, an' west, all before you — must you go and pitch straight for the Upper Point as ef the' wa'n't no other point to the compass but that one point?"

Dinsmore was saved an elucidation of his course in this regard by the appearance of Johnny Bowles,

FLOOD-TIDE

bringing the wearied and captured steer. "The door-steps ain't sprung," he announced with joy; "all they need is takin' back an' settin' up again."

"Thank ye very much, Everywheres an' Always an' Forever Where Ye Ain't Wanted," said Aunt Nag, with biting irony; "but ef you expect I'm goin' to use door-steps 't's been jumpin' and gallopin' all over the Bar, you're mistakened."

"Aunt Nag's in the rights of it," said Dorna. "My door-steps is jest the same size as hern, and my door-steps has allas led a quiet life. All I ask is 't Cap'n Alfred an' Cap'n Fyryards 'll take 'em over to Aunt Nag's an' set 'em up for her. The speckled hen is in the coop awaitin' her orders. The speckled hen is no longer mine, but yourn, Aunt Nag, which please accep' with my welcome regards."

Fyryards and I had already shouldered the door-steps, and Tilly was acting as the conveyer of the speckled hen.

"An' ef the's any more o' my property ye'd like," continued Dorna, with an earnest simplicity, "even to Zeke's enlargement, ye're welcome to it, Aunt Nag, for you hain't had no fair verdick."

Aunt Nag melted completely. She put down the kettle of duck-stew with a blush. "I didn't feel as 'twas right, Dorna—not havin', as you say, a fair verdick—for yer Pa Gleeson to go an' stew my duck, so I set his judgment to naught and went over and took it off the stove; but it's a mis'erable hefty burden, an' if you'll take it an' dispose of it yerself I'll be 'bleedged to ye."

"I thank you kin'ly, Aunt Nag, but it seems to me I couldn't—considerin' the harissments I've had over it—swaller none of that old defunk, not even ef 'twas seasoned beyond anything an' biled

LOOKING AT OURSELVES ON THE TREE

till the last trump; but I'll take it back over to pa, whose mind is so took up with legalities his stummick don't take no note of what's enterin' into it."

Dorna and Aunt Nag regarded one another with tender compassion as Dorna relieved her of the kettle.

"You're a honest, good-hearted woman, Dorna, in spite o' the boldness o' your carri'ge, and I've allas said so. But," added Aunt Nag, with gentle persuasiveness, "I ain't alone in thinkin' 't Dinsmore Gleeson is as eagle-wild as anything ever conceived of to the Bar."

XXXIII

THE SAILING CAPTAIN



HE more Dinsmore was under reprobation, the softer became his mother's arms. Very Madonna-like and sweet looked the fearless woman as she sat by his bedside that night.

"Dinsmore."

"Wal', ma?"

"Perhaps I been too proud o' your smartness."

"They all say I took it off'n you, ma."

Dorna's thought was so deep, her expression did not change. "And I'd be more glad than of all smartness ef you'd set out on the pathway of the saints."

"I ain't old enough to be one o' them, be I, ma?" said Dinsmore, examining with exclusive concern a scar of large dimensions on the tough black skin of his leg. "I'd have to be a *serraf*, ef I was anything, wouldn't I, ma?"

"To-morrow's your birthday, little son."

"I know it, an' I'm goin' over to Eagle Bluffs to fly my dove. Wonder ef pa'll come inshore. Las' birthday pa came inshore an' giv' me a lickin' with a barrel-hoop."

"Yer father never reddened the skin on yer flesh, Dinsmore; he's too fond o' ye."

"Oh, I didn't care. I like to have pa come inshore ;

THE SAILING CAPTAIN

I don't feel so much as ef I was under pet'coat gov'ment."

"Little son," said Dorna, very gently, "you'll *allas* be under pet'coat gov'ment. Yer father himself is under pet'coat gov'ment, an' owns up to it. So is all good men."

"I'm goin' to be a bachelor."

"You ain't of a size yet," said the mother with firmness, "'t I'm goin' to set here an' discuss the marriage topic with ye. But you're a Gleeson, an' ef you'll only wait to marry till you're old enough to have your eyes open 'stead of rushin' into it blind-fold as your father did, I shall be thankful. The Gleesons is all little black rhinoceroses till they pass fourteen years o' age. Then they grow an' spread like a gourd in the night. An' though they keeps the toughness o' their hides an' has fierce whiskers, their dispersions becomes soft an' peters out so 't any little smilin' cat 't lifts a paw can knock 'em over."

"I bet ye I can keep tough!"

Dorna patted her son softly. "I wish 't I knew what you'd like on your birthday—anythin', that is, that I could get for ye."

"Ef I could have all 't I wish I had, the' wouldn't be nothin' left in the world," said Dinsmore, with calm calculation, while his eyes glowed dreamily. "But the best you can do for me, ma, is to put some pockets in the stern o' my britches, like pa's. I got weather-brace pockets in 'em, I know, but a seaman ain't half rigged unless't he's got stern pockets, too."

"Ef you could see the spindleness o' your legs, Dinsmore, an' consider how your little trousers only comes above your knees, and how your pockets is *allas* bulgin' out with the contents of 'em, stern

FLOOD-TIDE

pockets would make nothin' more nor less than an aspect of you! But boys is boys, and you shall have 'em this night, for I'll set down by the lamp and go to riggin' of 'em."

Dinsmore smiled, his eyelids beginning to droop, heedless of all earthly ambitions.

"Afore you go off, Dinny, I want to ask you, why do you chuck ter death every straw hat I git for you, jest so 't you can go back on to wearin' your old fur cap? It can't be for warmth, for it's only by main force 't I can keep clo's enough elsewheres on your tabernacle to respec' the law. Why do you do it?"

"'Cause I like my old fur cap." His eyes glimmered affectionately at the object in question, where it lay, in appearance a little wormy, mangy heap, in a chair near by.

"Why do you think so much on it?"

"For its looks," admitted Dinsmore, blushing consciously from the weakness of pride.

Dorna sighed. "I hope as the years go by your tastes 'll git a little more pucker-struck; the's sech a thing as not bein' pucker-struck enough. Afore you go off"—she bent over him—"the' is love in your little obstrep'rous heart, ain't the', Dinny?"

Dinsmore gripped her hand in a spasm of interrupted sleep. "I love *you*, ma."

She put her lips to his heavy ear and said, yearningly, "Why don't you make more speed, little son, in tryin' to be a better boy?"

"I don' know, ma, unless 'n it is—that seamen—is lazy."

He was gone, blameless peace on his features, that asserted themselves innocent, almost white, in the pale light of the room.

THE SAILING CAPTAIN

"Oh," said the mother, "ef you only looked like that when you was awake, my darlin', you wouldn't be so fur off from bein' a serrafer." And she went softly away to equip his trousers with the promised stern pockets.

And now fully rigged, according to his notion, for his earthly voyage, it was with Dinsmore as it is with all of us, busy getting together cabin furniture and store as though bound for some haven infinitely remote—the breakers of the destined shore are already sounding on our ear! Better the lone sea-bird knows the way, who, while towering pinnacle and ponderous freight crumble on the reef, wings with the gale her desolate, exultant flight safe beyond wreck and surge.

They are wise at the Bar; they make no cumbrous preparations for living, hearing too well the monitions of the sea. The passage of the bird is theirs.

But Dinsmore, with his new stern pockets full of clam and herring bait, of gear and tackle, mingled with such reviving refreshments as birch bark and Indian tobacco leaves—Dinsmore intuitively looked out upon life on his birthday morning as an endless gift that needed no fostering or alarm on his part. And Dinsmore was right, and his pockets held paraphernalia all sufficient for a sailing captain who may dwell not long by this dim isle.

His dove was in his arms, and Everywheres was at his side.

"Why don't ye git some pockets put in yer stern, Ev'wheres?" said Dinsmore, with the gait and manner of the gruffest mariners.

"I ain't got no women folks belongin' to me," piped up Everywheres, with melancholy envy.

FLOOD-TIDE

Then he added, "Aunt Nag said you looked like an 'aspect.'"

"Pooh! she don't know nothin' about seamen's rig. She's allas findin' fault with boys. 'Member the time she 'cused us of destriyin' her flowers, when we hadn't been anigh her old flowers?"

"But then we did."

"'Course, after she'd put us in mind of it, all us boys clubbed together an' set a night. 'Member how she was hid in the woodbine an' loped out at us? Hi! Did ye ever see sech a scatterin' o' boys, Ev'wheres?"

"No," assented Everywheres, "I never see sech a h'istin' up an' down."

"'Member how we fooled Cap'n Wanbeak about his hoss? Stowed away the meal 'ceptin' a little flicker in the bottom o' the bar'l, an' then went in an' told him we guessed his hoss had been in the meal bar'l, anyways 'twas all gone. Didn't he lace that bitin' ol' beas' up an' down the lane for two hours, ter pervent the meal swellin' in him, when the' wa'n't nothin' in his ol' insides but beach grass! I haves to wake up in the night an' laff sometimes when I think o' that aspec'."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen," said Everywheres, approvingly, though he was not himself a great laugh.

Thus Dinsmore with his sinfulest reminiscences beguiled the way, the dove lying without a ruffle of fear in her accustomed shelter near his heart.

"Now," said he, arrived at Eagle Bluffs, "she's flew from the wood-pile away down to Grappy Glee-son's landin', an' she won't make nothin' o' flyin' right acrost here to Baldy's Island; then we'll put over in Lote's skiff an' git her."

THE SAILING CAPTAIN

His eyes glowed with admiring tenderness as he held the dove forward in his two hands on the brink of the cliff.

"Stop to the first landin', dovey—that's Baldy's right over there—an' I'll come over an' git ye. Now spread yourself—who—o—o! go!"

The dove, whether appalled at the height, or for whatever reason, spread her wings but faintly, fluttered, fell to a jutting rock half-way down the cliff; there she moaned and fluttered.

Dinsmore, white with pitiful love—not fear; he had no thought now of fear—began to pick his perilous way, descending.

"Say—hol' on, Dinny! She's only a dove. Say—you'll hear the Beel Islanders singin'—"

"I'll fetch her back. Say!" called Dinsmore, looking down at the next unpromising foothold, but still with no dream of fear. "Say, Ev'wheres, —here's hopin'!"

He reached the little projecting shelf and lifted the dove with an unspeakable softness in his wild blue eyes. "I didn't mean to hurt ye. I thought ye'd fly over. I on'y meant it to please ye. Now I'll carry ye up, an' get ye cured o' ary hurt." With one wayworn suspender he tied the little creature safe within the breast of his calico shirt. So well he was ascending that Everywheres, looking down, exclaimed again, confidently, "Here's hopin'!"

"Here's hopin'!" chanted Dinsmore—and those words, still with no sign of fear, were frozen on his lips when they found him afterwards at the bottom of the cliff, the dead bird on his silent breast, washed by the tide he loved so well.

"He was a'mos' to the top," said Everywheres, "an' a piece o' the clift broke away on him an' he

FLOOD-TIDE

fell, jes as he was callin' up ter me, Here's hopin'. But I tol' him—I tol' him he'd hear the Beel Islan'ers singin'."

They sing well—the Beel Islanders. They sing away all dread and agony from the soul of him who listens. They sing him a secret of quiet shore and waving palms, from their choir-throne amid the rocks and billows, and he smiles as he listens.

"Ye little sea-dog, ye," said Captain Shale, tears streaming down his cheeks as he looked down at Dinsmore, in whose arms the dove had been placed again for their funeral day, "where be ye sailin' now? Eh, little—sailin'—captain, where be ye sailin' now?"

"He c'd row," said Bayruck, "when his head 'u'd jest reach up to the gun'le."

"He c'd learn his lessons like fork lightnin'," said Fyryards, proudly, "jest while he was bendin' pins an' lookin' all around the school-house; but ye'd never 'a' got him away from salt water. He was a Gleeson. He was one o' the kind 't jest as soon as they git ter be a few feet long, they have ter git out into the ocean."

Now every heart was full of proud and tender memories, while the little rover 'ay, with the love that had made him descend the cliff still on his face, and fearless daring, and over all the soft music of the Beel Islanders.

Dorna and Zeke—to have the heart broken and to weep is bitter enough, but their faces were too bewildered and strained for weeping.

"There's nary minister," said poor Zeke. "We sent for one, but his folks was sick and he couldn't come. Cap'n Aberm Shale—Uncle Abe—will you say somethin'?"

THE SAILING CAPTAIN

"I don' know as I can," said Uncle Abe, choking. "We use' to find fault with our little sailin' captain there, but we knew the' was gran', good stuff in him.

"Little Everywheres says 't he heard Dinsmore sayin' to his dove, 'I'll carry ye up, an' I'll git ye cured o' ary hurt.' So he's done it. He's carried him up, where they, an' all on us, 'll git cured o' ary hurt. He's sayin' more 'n I can say to ye, for his countenance has changed. Life's full o' wounds—wounds to the body and wounds to the heart. God lead us up to His own heart, where we'll git cured o' ary hurt. Amen."

"Sing, Infra," said a voice.

I had brought my wife over from her vigils with Margaret Langthorne. It had been a fight with death, and Infra's eyes were large from those weary shadows, and strangely beautiful. Now, when Dorna saw her, she came and threw herself upon her heart, and a tumult of sobs shook her, and Zeke, white and dazed, came and stood by her side.

Then, after a while, Dorna said, "You—you all alone, Infra—sing."

And Infra came and stood by Dinsmore and the dove, and as she looked down a sharp sorrow drew her lips and they trembled, so that we thought she would not sing.

Then she lifted her eyes, and there was neither life nor death, but all was life, unbroken, and parting was brief, and the tired soul left its struggle of tears, borne upward in the arms of God.

"O Paradise! O Paradise!

Who doth not crave thy rest?

Who would not seek that happy land

Where they that loved are blest?

FLOOD-TIDE

" O Paradise! O Paradise!
The world is growing old.
Who would not be at rest and free—
Where love grows never cold?

" O Paradise! O Paradise!"

* * * * *

She sang, and prayer and liturgy and the Resurrection and the Life triumphed in her voice.

XXXIV

“WOE! WOE!”



HAT ye tinkerin' away at the door for?—sounded like a woodpecker,” said Dave Marlow’s housekeeper, in cordial disapproval of knocking, even to so unloved a guest as Tyrolese Dunbar. “Where is Dave?”

She made a brief motion with her head. Dunbar went into the next room and closed the door behind him.

“We’ll begin our fine sail to-morrow night, Dave, you and Alpena and I, and I’ve a good woman to put aboard to care for Alpena.”

Tyrolese spoke in a low voice, with an affected buoyancy, as though his proposition were the most natural thing in the world. “Alpy will be glad to go, when she finds herself aboard. Every one will be leaving the Bar soon, except the natives. Captain Alfred and his wife are going soon. I mean that Alpy shall meet some of her old friends, when we get happily settled, away.”

Dave lay with his head comfortably low and his feet elevated to one arm of the lounge.

“I’m sick o’ you gangin’ on to me, Tyrry. No sooner git ashore for a little rest ’n you’re up here reelin’ off your bulls an’ bears; makes me think o’ a yarn one o’ the crew tells, about a land bunkin’

FLOOD-TIDE

up ag'in' the north pole. Gol! Says he's been there. Says the name of it is Ding Dong, an' it's a hundred mile long by three hundred in circumf'nce; move a stone in the centre an' the air comes up so warm it shutes the fruit an' flowers right out o' the 'arth; when ye want to cool off jest move the stone on ag'in. Or how, over there to Sweden, they shot a man up inter the moon. Says it can be done ef the moon's only bearin' right. Gol! What makes ye wear sech dam-fool trousers? Ye look tauter 'n a snare-drum."

Ignoring the reference to his personal appearance, Tyrolese stood firmly, like a man quite sure of his footing.

"There's no romance about our plan, Dave. And now let me tell you, I don't mean to be left forestanding on this job. I know Alpena Marlow's parentage, and it's better luck for you if you carry out my orders skilfully, and—prison if you do not."

Simple Dave turned a sudden ashen color. Tyrolese, without too close a scrutiny, went on, cheerfully:

"When I have her for my wife, and her identity is established—though I wanted her just the same as a poor girl, and that you know—our united income will be a pretty figure, I can tell you, and you, who serve me this turn, need never lift a finger to labor again while you live. A world of good victuals and good drink, eh? Come, get into your shoes and get things ready by to-morrow night."

"I wish," said Dave, running his hand through his curly hair peevishly—"wish 't I'd never seen ye. Wish 't I was back in the *Old Bum*. Poor old crittur', I've cussed her enough, but I wish 't I was back sailin' in her every time I git a glimpsst at her left down there by the shore forestandin'."

"WOE! WOE!"

"She's taken you many a cruise, Dave," said Dunbar, with sympathy, knowing that this feeling *détour* was the better way to get back to the project in hand.

"Gol! She's danced some tunes offshore here, too. Ye don't know nothin' about it, ye little tautened-up snare-drum. 'Member one night off Hell Teeth, in a screechin' sou'easter. Wickedest night I ever see. She'd r'ar up like a hoss an' a pair o' thills clearin' a seven-pole fence. Them was combin's! Said I wouldn't bale her out, not ef she went to the bottom."

"Why not?"

"Got my back up—mad as she was—mad as all creation was that night. Wind blowin' so as to show the mud to the bottom o' the ocean! Riggin' all outer shape. I kep' a-beatin', by thunder; said I'd resk it 'fore I'd tack, by thunder!"

Dave was on his elbow, his blue eyes glittering with elemental fire. "Gol durn ye, little snare-drum, it 'u'd make the hair stan' up on yer head—some places where I been with the old craft. Wish 't I was sailin' of her now, 'stead o' rattin' it 'long o' you. Ye got rat wisdom, an' I ain't. Good mind to throttle ye."

"I'd give fifty thousand dollars if I had your knowledge of the sea, Dave," said Dunbar, humbly. "I could spare that, you know, without any fear of poverty," and he jingled such wealth as there was in his pocket reflectively. "You'd do for a big enterprise, but this little affair of mine—it must seem tame to you. You would not do it, only that it is going to take Alpena out of this old eagle's nest of a life and give her luxury and happiness."

"Thought ye said ye could prove them belonged to her of her own rights."

FLOOD-TIDE

"So I can. It's as wonderful as the land of Ding Dong, and yet there's nothing strange about it. Alpy is of noble birth, and I always knew it. I know more, Dave Marlow. I know how you have stolen and defrauded the girl of her rights. Now, look here, I know this whole business from first to last."

This he did not, but he knew enough to strike terror to Dave's soul, and his eyes gloated over the great, foolish victim paling and cowering before him.

"You've nothing to fear; only 'get into your shoes,' as they say down here, and then stand up in 'em like a man and do this little piece of work we've agreed on. I've planned it well. To-morrow night—no moon—black as Styx—full tide. The crew can bring the vessel right up to the old herring wharf. Tell Alpy you've got some silk stuff aboard for her that you want to give her before you sail. She trusts you in a way; she knows you're never up to any mischief with *her*; and there *is* silk stuff aboard for her, and nothing but silk hereafter. She'll step aboard with you to get it, and then we'll just slip away. I shall keep hidden out of sight—of course you'll say nothing about me—till we're well under way. A clergyman friend of mine will be aboard, Dave, and fair witnesses, yourself among them. And if she is inclined to think the marriage a little forced at first, she'll be a willing accessory enough when she finds wealth and power in her hands. She's that kind. As for your own reward, you've already had a taste of it, but you've got surety for a full dish when the thing is done."

"I'll get into my shoes, as you say, and stand up in 'em," replied Dave, slowly and desperately; "but I want to tell ye one thing. As ye say, *I'll be there*, and ef ye play that girl mean or false, I don' care for

“WOE! WOE!”

law nor prison nor nothin' else, I'll stop yer win'pipe for good 'n' all, sure as I'm a-talkin'."

"That's right," said Tyrolese, with an easy laugh; "that's the way I want you to feel."

After a little further conference he left his surly accomplice, who drew on his boots in a determined though bewildered manner and lurched out heavily into the night.

"Woe! woe! woe!" The voice of the breakers below smote on his ear. It was seldom he had any mental consciousness of the sound. To-night he shrugged his shoulders.

"It's wuss 'n a tollin' bell," he muttered. "Be glad ter git away f'om it for good 'n' all. 'Tarnal tollin'."

He tramped on with a distinct purpose to where the *Old Bum* lay, half beached.

"Hello, old cuss!" said he, fondly. "Poor old crittur, neither you nor the tide tergether ain't strong enough ter cut away. I'll fix ye so 't anybody 't goes to foolin' with ye 'll get sick o' the'r game."

He busied himself with the old craft for some time, stamping over her affectionately and turning the light of his lantern here and there for a bit of sinister workmanship.

"There, old cuss! Ye look taut as ever, but anybody 't takes you out ter make sport o' ye 'll have ter swim ashore, and you'll go down where ye'd ruther lie 'n up here on the beach for a scarecrow. Last I can do for ye, *Old Bum*. You an' I had our last cruise tergether. I got a clipper now—an' I'm goin' to the devil in her, I guess," he laughed brokenly.

XXXV

THE FISHERMAN'S LOVE



'M sorry your health's so slender, Dr. Marg'ret," said Arch, with cheerful embarrassment. The woe was gone from his face; the old springing delight was in his voice. She had sent word to him that he might come in to see her, and now she was regarding him with her half-indifferent, studious smile.

"Why are you so glad, you senseless, happy, hot-headed boy?"

"I suppose it's because I don't hope any more."

"You don't hope any more?"

"No, I don't want to hope any more. It's better not."

She sighed. "Yes, hoping is a poor business. But your remarkable constancy amuses me. I believe I have found, though, one true nature. If I might have Infra always near me, with her adorable physical and moral strength, it would do me incalculable good. She rests me."

"Alfred's got her," commented Arch, still rejoicingly.

"How did he have the sense to claim such a treasure?" continued Margaret, frankly musing. "I dare say he stumbled upon it."

"Infra sang over little Dinny. Dinsmore's sailed

THE FISHERMAN'S LOVE

out, you know. She sang over him. If I was go'n' to be baptized over again, I'd like to hear that same music down to the water's edge."

"What do you mean? 'Dinsmore sailed out.'"

"Yes. Gone. Slipped his moorin's off this shore, and sailin' off somewheres, same as ever, 'long o' God."

"I suppose you mean that that black, mischievous little wretch with the fur cap is dead?"

"No, I don't. I don't mean ary such thing. I mean what I said." Arch's eyes flashed.

"How you are relapsing in grammar. And did he whom you call Everywheres 'sail off' with him?"

"No, he's still here 'longshore."

"I am comforted," said Margaret, in her tone of elegant and weary sarcasm. "The 'saints' do not recognize death, I know. It is a pity, for it is the one sure and faithful boon to humanity." The woman sighed and turned her face on the pillow—the beautiful, morbid, selfish face. Arch looked tenderly at the clear profile.

"It wasn't much of a posy-bunch to bring you, Dr. Marg'ret," he said, referring to some stalwart vegetation that lay near her pillow, "only sweet Alpine and moose-wood and squaw-bush. I'm goin' to get some choke-berries for ye. Slate Island's red with 'em."

"Ah! Are they to eat?"

"No, just to make a posy-bunch of."

"I am glad of that. My diet in this world has been largely of choke-berries—things too bitter to swallow."

There was no mistaking the significance of her words, even to the simple Bar sense.

"Give it up, Marg'ret. Give it all up—wantin'

FLOOD-TIDE

ary happiness for yourself—and make up pityin' an' kind to other folks as though it was they had the troubles, and not you. When ye do that the Lord kind o' reds ye o' the heart-bleed."

"You poor fisherman, one could well do without happiness if there were only some balance of justice in avor of moral effort and the pain that comes from upward striving."

Arch followed the upraised look of her dark eyes; his mind was in a kind of numb perplexity concerning her, but his heart had regained its original fibre of fearless joy.

"I use' to think," he declared, choking a little in metaphysics, but loud in tone and persevering—"I use' to think 't life was for me ter do big things and have my own way, but I foun' it's jest to stan' up an' smile hearty-like back to God while a body's own self gits broken. It's more, sure enough, 'n runnin' a four-master or takin' a city; it's harder, too, Marg'ret."

"Oh, everything is hard, and the hardest of all is that cause and effect, love and its reward, are all in a hopeless tangle."

"It ain't no love worth namin' that wants a reward. That I know—by earth and by heaven!"

"You know nothing," said Margaret, regarding him with curious contemplation. "You are a bundle of primitive impulses. But somewhere in your ancestry there must have been a strong poetic temperament and considerable mental force. It has sunk low in you, poor fellow. You have a perfect physique, and a heart that soon overrides any little disturbance. And that—is all—you have."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen," said Arch, with reverent politeness.

THE FISHERMAN'S LOVE

"I had thought love might prove of such force in you as to awaken dormant faculties. I gave you my earnest thought, my very vitality, but you are inert. Well, perhaps it is as well. If you can have any rest in my suffering I am glad you should."

Arch's fine eyes stared sweetly before him in bewilderment.

"I guess I loved you all right," said he, at length, gently. "It was like findin' somethin' that belonged to me—so precious I hardly dared breathe it—as I carried it along home. But I reckon the's only jest a little measure o' happiness in this world; money don't make it, but it falls in strange places, and it leaves us thirsty and willin' still ter travel on—for the's other countries. I reckon to find ye again. An' I'm grateful for the cup 't ye gave me to drink. It was sweeter 'n life, though it was full o' sorer, too. I'm glad for all the way. I shouldn't 'a' found this cup on ary other road."

"Despair becomes you," said the woman, half reaching her slender hand towards him. "Youth and happiness have scales over their eyes. Poverty, despair, and death see clearly: then the little things seem little and the great things great."

Some inspiration touched her. She put her hand in his. It was the only time she had ever really given herself to him, and he knew that she would soon withdraw the gift, as she did, with an inconstant blush, sighing restlessly.

"It is well, then. You do not regret the sorrow, Arch?"

"Regret! I guess not! The's a pilot, though I don't see him."

"You bounding child! You giant child! You'll have nothing to do with sorrow. It does not touch

FLOOD-TIDE

you!" She put both hands over her eyes, holding them thus still for a moment, remote in her own consciousness of suffering. The bed-gown she wore was some exquisite foreign thing, a touching, incomprehensible intrigue of lace and embroidery. Arch looked rather stupidly at thrilling sorrow and thrilling gown.

"Marg'ret, I offered ye, and offer ye, all I have. It wa'n't enough, and it is not enough. Then do ye think I'm goin' to bother ye—poor lamb—by cryin' and teasin' ye about it?"

"You are right. And having once made up your mind to a thing, to rest in the decision joyfully is not the least of your stolid virtues. You are looking out now with the sea-longing in your eyes, poor Arch. Let us talk over topics that please you. Which way is the wind?"

"To east'ard."

"Good. There's the salt and the ring of it in your voice. How about the tide?"

"It's young flood-tide, Marg'ret."

"It always will be with you."

"It's the dark o' the moon."

"Never mind."

"I don't mind," he said, quite practically. "The fog's shuttin' down."

"Poor fellow, what if you should get to drifting in it?"

"Ha! It would be strange works if I couldn't find my way out o' a fog."

"I would trust you. They don't drown in your family."

"Oh yes, they do. My mother use' to tell she had seven brothers drowned, some far away, some in their own door-yards, as ye might say. Well, it was the

THE FISHERMAN'S LOVE

way they was to go." He stood compassionately near her, vague as to his leave-taking.

"Ef the fog hadn't shut down it wouldn't be so dark, Marg'ret."

She laughed, in a soft, cajoling, caressing way. "Brilliant one. If the fog had not shut down it would not be so dark. True. What next?"

"Well—good-bye," he said, very tenderly—"good-bye, Marg'ret." He laid his brown hand on hers for an instant, and was making towards the door.

"Arch," she said, with a sudden sharp cry, like a child's, "you do not love me any more!"

He came back and knelt beside her, and laid his head on her breast. No word came from his lips, no sob shook him. It was an avowal silent, and its self-renunciation more than priestly. Margaret for that little space forsook the tenuous thread of life and logic that lay so snarled in her tired hands, and breathed freely and without pain in the world of the great—who have no reason for being great.

Still silently under that spell, as in the revelation of a dream, he left her.

XXXVI

SLIPPED MOORINGS



OW was Everywheres lonely; and, missing the direction of Dinsmore's wise genius, his works and his diversions took on a blunt Satanity, all the more thorough because free from the quivering inspiration of malice.

Dorna found him sitting dejectedly on her doorsteps, and he lifted to her eyes full of the hollow mockery of crime.

"I've sprinkled yer cats, Mis' Gleeson."

This heinous offence should naturally have aroused the good woman to expressions of righteous ire, but she simply said, in a voice of weary sorrow:

"I noticed as how the cats was all droopin' an' wet, Everywheres."

"Ain't ye mad?" he inquired, disappointment and incredulity in his round eyes.

For answer she sat down beside him and put a motherly arm around him. "No, I ain't mad."

One thought was in the mind of both.

"I wish 't I could find Dinny," said Everywheres. "I wish 't I knew wheres to look for him. I'd jes' as soon die as not, an' look around in some new places. I been everywheres the' is around here."

"I know it," said Dorna. "I'd just as lief die myself and go look for him. What was them las'

SLIPPED MOORINGS

words he called up to ye?" Dorna had asked the question many times.

"'Here's hopin'.'"

"How did he look?"

"Jest dretful fond o' his dove."

The woman and the boy sat forlornly, but in untold sympathy.

"I won't sprinkle yer cats no more, Mis' Gleeson."

"Perhaps it's jus' as well not. The's sufferin' enough without heavin' it on to ary poor thing 't might jus' as well hump along without it."

"Sprinklin' don't make 'em suffer."

"No, but it gives 'em a mean aspect, and they seem to take it more to heart 'n as if their necks was clean broke off an' taggin' along after 'em."

Though Dorna's words were commonplace and discursive, her encircling arm conveyed to Everywheres a sense, which he could by no means have defined, of universal charity and tender aspiration.

"Want me to fetch ye a pail o' water, Mis' Gleeson?"

She did not care about it, but she thought it better to accept the sacrifice.

"Yes, I wish 't you would, Everywheres."

Watching his straining little figure returning from the spring with a brimming offering, she was reminded so keenly of another form that she lifted her clasped hands upward, an agonized appeal for help in her eyes.

She was calm when the boy came in.

"Ye've red me of a great burden, luggin' the water for me, Everywheres, an' I thank ye."

She handed him a large piece of pie—it had been Dinsmore's favorite kind.

FLOOD-TIDE

He received it with the solemn joy of a formal legacy, and departed devouring it.

"Tyr'lese Dunbar's go'n' to take Alpy off ter new places, an' she'll have purty clo's an' conversation hearts an' musk marbles an' all sech, no end," he communed with himself in delicious envy. "He's a bad man, though, I reckon. The evil sperrit I sold ter him didn't seem to do him no harm. Guess I'll scare the lights out er him this evenin' with the old Jack-'-lantern."

Everywheres hastened to the cleft of a remote though familiar rock, and drew out a large pumpkin perforated in a culmination of the art of hideous expression. This one had even a forked tongue that could be thrust in and out at will, through some propelling medium at the back of its head. It was a little rusty from disuse, and Everywheres toiled with untiring pains to reinstate the original mechanism in which the tongue actually hissed as it leaped forth in flame. This accomplished at last, he blew out the candle; for he could see in the darkest night, and the fear of anything physical was simply alien to his imagination.

He knew the plan that Dunbar and Dave Marlow had on foot; he had not revealed it, having a half-formed determination to stow himself away on the merry renegade craft. As for Alpena, the intimation which he had heard from Dunbar's lips, that the escapade implied glorious things for her, met wholly with the approval of his own ambitious reason.

So he had waited patiently for the hour and kept a sage tongue in his head.

"Tyr'lese 'll be walkin' along the cliffs over to the Narrows, lookin' to see ef Dave's in his shoes

SLIPPED MOORINGS

an' stirrin' 'round. I'll go over there an' spit at him with the old Jack'-lantern, so he'll be afraid I'll tell how scart he was, an' he won't sass me when I shows up on the vessel. Hi! An' I'll run down ter the vessel an' hide away by the time they gits Alpy aboard."

Dunbar knew that Dave must be treated cautiously at this juncture; that any show of eagerness or authority might dissipate his whole plan and render his tool, in spite of threats and fears, immovable as a rock.

So it was with mounting exultation that he saw the burly form of Dave himself moving with a lantern about the house and shed with unmistakable signs of forwardness and enterprise.

"She's to be mine — mine!" muttered Tyrolese; and the "Woe! woe!" borne up to him by the bruised surf did not even pierce the joyful orchestra that danced and shouted in his ear.

"Mine! mine! Alpy! God, I never dared believe it till this hour! The tall, sweet beauty. Indifferent. Haughty. Mine at last!" He saw her at his side, not ill-pleased that she transcended him in height; he pictured her dressed richly as a queen; he saw people gazing at her and at him as her lord and master.

"Mine! She loves adoration. She shall have it. But she'll be mine—my beauty, my wife!"

He turned his feet to hasten back, now that all was well. A hideous thing sprang out at him from the covert of a rock, a tongue of fire leaped hissing in his face; with a cry he sprang aside, too late tottered at the edge of the gulf, and, with a scream that would have struck terror to a less practical soul than Everywheres, he fell.

FLOOD-TIDE

Everywheres leaned inquiringly over the edge of the cliff.

"It's slopin'er here 'n some places. Guess he's only stunted. Mebbe he's got up an' made for the vessel, 'long the beach."

The boy extinguished the flame in his direful luminary, hid it away again for future usefulness, and fled earnestly towards the scene of his next adventure.

Alpena, both through Margaret Langthorne and her new foster-mother, Mrs. Temple, had added to her natural pride an aristocratic regard for *convenances*.

"I'll go down to the vessel with you, father, and get the silk, if Aunt Hudy Bratt goes with me."

"Come along, old woman," said Dave to his house-keeper, with a leer, and wondered that he had not thought of taking her before. When Alpena called him "father" he was as wax in her hands. He was braced for his undertaking with the mellowest of potations, and had an optimistic sense that things could not be very wrong since he was taking his entire household along with him.

"Is Tyr'lese 'board the boat?" demanded Aunt Hudy.

"No. Do you think I would go down to it if he were?" said Alpena, with high head. "He never touches it. He's afraid of the water! You honestly bought the goods with your own money, father? You might have brought us down to give us the things in the daytime, instead of thinking of it just before you were going to sail. You are so stupid."

"Yes, Alpy, I paid for 'em fast enough."

"What a harn'some cabin! Look at them state-rooms! What a endurin' shame for you ol' fishin'

SLIPPED MOORINGS

loots ter be havin' the run o' sech a vessel as this!" said Aunt Hudy Bratt; "settin' up sech a foco here with yer musty ol' pipes a body can't breathe."

This was a comment of the imagination on probabilities, for no one was smoking and no one appeared near as she and Alpy gazed in admiration at the rich furnishings of the yacht, silk and velvet and gold and soft streaming lights, a fairy place of warmth and light bursting on them from the gloom outside.

"She's driftin', Alpy," exclaimed Mrs. Bratt, suddenly.

They rushed for Dave as they spoke, who meanwhile had drunk deep and laid himself on a divan.

"Take us back, Dave, you old fool! The vessel's driftin'!" cried Aunt Hudy. Nothing could rouse him. They fled to the deck and commanded the crew, who answered not, but held on their way doggedly.

The night was dank and bitter, and the women went back gasping into the cabin. An obsequious female appeared and threw a fur-lined cloak with a hood over Alpena's shoulders. "When you go on the deck, you are to wear this. I am to serve you, miss."

A clerical individual of smooth aspect was also seen, seated in a lounging-chair, reading with affected calm. He rose and bowed as they entered.

Light flashed through Alpena's brain.

"He's hidden here, Aunt Hudy! He's hidden somewhere aboard!" She clutched her old friend with frantic hands.

Aunt Hudy's courage mounted at the wild appeal.

"I hope he is! I'll thring him overboard afore he so much as breshes your garments. I kin do it, an' I will!"

FLOOD-TIDE

A spectre crept into the room, white-haired, round-eyed, ghostly familiar.

"He ain't aboard. I looked everywheres. He must 'a' been stunted. I spit the ol' Jack'-lantern tongue at him over to the Narrows. I seed him fall. Reckin he's stunted."

Aunt Hudy shook Dave with superhuman energy. "You wicked old fool, ye've missed yer deal. Tyr'lese ain't here—he's left ashore. Now you take us back, d'ye hear?" She shook him.

Dave stirred feebly, and opened his red eyes.

"Tyr'lese lef' ashore?"

"Yes."

He staggered to his feet.

"Hooray! 'Ray! 'Ray! Devil lef' ashore! Said he'd be hid a' right. Said he'd pop up. 'Ray! I ain' goin' back. Git a'rested ef I go back. Got ol' woman 'board, an' my own born gal—hic!—plent' to eat, plent' to drink, lots o' money. Le' me 'lone! Drive her 'head, I say! Tyr'lese ashore! 'Ray! Drive her 'head! I'm masser o' this ves'l, an' I got papers ter prove it."

"Father"—Alpena put both hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes—"won't—you—take—me—back?"

"Can't. Poor little gal. Take good keer o' ye. Can't go back. Don' want yer father put in jail, do ye?—hic!—can't go back—no. Do ary thing else for ye, little born gal—hic!"

XXXVII

THE SONG OF THE BEEL-ISLANDERS



“I WANT to know what’s the matter wi’ ye all here,” said Ed Thressle, stamping excitedly into the midst of the group in Dorna’s kitchen, “’t your boats is all fetched to anchor over in South Harbor? What blame trick ye up to? The’ ain’t a boat lef’ in yer own harbor. Gone crazy? I tramped over here three mile to see.”

“What!” Harlan sprang first to his feet.

“I say they all been stowed away over there under cover o’ darkness. What ye up to?”

Harlan seized his lantern and ran out, the others following. The fog had lifted a little, bleakly, the wind stirring in the northwest.

“Is Dunbar’s boat over there?”

“No.”

Harlan turned the light of his flash lantern with a fierce hand. “She ain’t at her moorin’s. Boys, he’s carried off Alpy! The fox, the cursed low fox, knew ’twas a night we come to Dorna’s to sing—he had the big boats towed over to South Harbor in the dark so ’t ef we diskivered him we couldn’t give chase. Alpy! Our Alpy!”

Earle came running towards the assembled lanterns.

“Mith Ma’low’s gone off in Dunba’s vetthel. Yeth,

FLOOD-TIDE

thir. I been thmokin' herrin' over to my thmoke-house—like to thmoke herrin' nights; had to go over to Crumples' to-day to get thome more pins—"

"When, Earle? When? When did you see Alpy?"

"'Bout half-hour ago. Theen her from my thmoke-house—theen her go 'board the vetthel."

"What tack, Earle?"

"Narrers' tack. Yeth, thir."

"I know his course." Harlan's eyes glowed at the *Old Bum*, stranded too high for the tide to deliver. "Heave her off, boys! She's a witch when put to it. I'll double-reef her old rags. He shall give up the girl, or we'll stave him broadsides flyin'. This old devil's salted oak—she can do a piece o' work yet! He'll give her up; he's a low-born coward! Boys, our Alpy! Alpy! The fox sha'n't have her this night!"

"Chum, I'm with ye." Arch's voice sent bounding cheer through the suspense and threatening of the night.

"I know ye're with me, Arch. This is a work for you and me." The two received the hour as though they had been sent to it from eternity.

"She'll lug all right single reef—wind's drivin' fast to nor'ard—dipped her rails a'ready!" a mariner from the shore shouted shrilly after them.

Harlan smiled indifferently, his face set like a commanding fate.

"I don't care what she dips," he said to Arch, almost gayly, "so long as she makes ahead. She's snortin' to win the race, eh!" he exulted as they flew. "She's stiffenin', eh!"

"She's workin' for us heart an' soul," cried Arch. "Allas heard 't she took a witch night to say her prayers an' mind her helm. She's a-doin' her peni-

THE SONG OF THE BEEL-ISLANDERS

tence. Poor old wrack, she hums like a sperrit. 'Druther have her 'n our own boat to-night."

Witch-gay to the wind, her rotten canvas seemed to scream for joy. She met the waves defiantly.

"It's goin' to be wicked by-'n'-by," said Harl, noting the few stars in the broken and turbulent west. "Dunbar 'll make for Big Harbor ter save his neck. We'll ketch him there ef we don't run foul o' him on the way."

"Sure." Arch was busy in the beggarish rigging, climbing here and there, dressed in the thin, black broadcloth with which he had honored Dorna's *musicale*. He bowed to catch a rope on this tattered sea-craft as blithely, as smilingly, as some ballroom suitor leading his lady to the dance; his eyes shed golden fire in the lantern light and his cheeks glowed warmly.

"It's a pleasant night, Harl," he laughed.

"July evenin'!" Harl sang back, for he felt neither wind nor cold so long as the boat held madly on her course.

"This is the purtiest cruise we ever took."

"Jest the purtiest!" answered Harl.

"An' we kep' chums lifelong, feared o' nothin', an' that's the way we'll face God tergether this night. It's a purty cruise. Ay, sure."

"What ye mean, lad?" said Harl, sharply. He had never once turned his face, set over the helm like a sovereign fate.

"I mean 't I can hear the Beel-Islanders singin'."

"Pshaw! Arch. Ye allas had a fancy ear. Ye'd hear the 'music o' the sp'eres,' you would!" said Harl, good-naturedly. "We won't listen to no Beel-Islanders till we get this job done."

"Quit yer helm, Harl, an' listen. Might as well.

FLOOD-TIDE

I mean 't the *Old Bum's* fillin'. I been a-pluggin' her an' a-balin'—ye ain't noticed nothin' but the helm—but she's trapped, an' mortal man can't stay it no longer. It's a purty night, all the same. We done our best. Le's face it hearty. God's got somethin' ter explain t' you an' me."

"God!" Harl, as he realized the situation, let go the rudder and lifted a clenched hand.

"God! That traps the innercent and lets the fiends o' hell work their will. Amen. So be it."

Arch laughed in his face, threw a strong arm round him.

"And you gone crazy!" Harlan said. "Wal', that's good for dyin'."

"Dyin' none!" cried Arch. "What's the matter wi' ye? Hark!"

"An' hear the warnin' o' the bell-buoy on Cradle Rock."

"That's lef' behind. That's a long way back. Listen, ol' man—the islanders got a new organ. Did ye ever hear mightier? We'll swim over an' go inter the service. They'll welcome us warm, bein' castaways."

"Beel Islan's many mile away. What shore? What church?" said Harlan, dully, but he listened.

"D' ye hear that voice above the others, Harl?"

Does it come from below there, or from heaven? Wind and wave are hurling, jubilant; but it sounds o'er wind and wave. Is this a madman's faith, or God's brief vestibule to heaven?

Their eyes were wide, but in no frenzy. The blood tan of earthly voyaging had left their cheeks forever; yet Arch smiled attentively, his hand releasing the failing mast.

"D' ye hear, Harl?"

THE SONG OF THE BEEL-ISLANDERS

“Ay—ay. God forgi’ me them poor words I spake!”

“Then come. We’ll go tergether. My soul upon it, chum, we’ll make the shore! Harl! Harl, ol’ man, here’s hopin’!”

“Hoping!”

XXXVIII

HARL TRODDEN



DAVE MARLOW'S sullen crew ran into Big Harbor two hours before the dawn. With the first streak of light Dave grew insupportably suspicious and restless and ordered the boat put out to sea; the men refused.

"'Tain't no wind, cap'n, it's a growin' gale; an' it's the wane o' September, which breeds a kind 't can h'ist theirselves higher an' do more wrackin' 'n ary man can guess at. Look a' the hubbub here in harbor. Ye can smell how purty it's gettin' outside. We'll stay to home, thank ye."

"Ye ain't cap'ble sayin' what ter do, Dave," said another, boldly. "Ye're so full ye can only jest stiver."

"'Druther resk it 'n get ketched here by them young panthers over from the Bar, an' git mauled an' jailed. Ev' one o' ye git jailed."

"They can't git over through this sea, I tell ye. Tell ye she's a skyful o' hags loosin' theirselves f'om every dam hole in the firm'ment. All we can do to stan' up in harbor!"

"Ye're nothin' but a set o' mud-flounders," cried Dave, stormily. "Ye're afeared o' a little breeze o' wind," and he laughed derisively. "Git off'n here, then, wi' the old woman an' the gal, an' go ashore

HARL TRODDEN

an' bottle yerselves on warm milk, ye pulin' babbies, an' I'll take the vessel out alone. I seen salt water afore!"

"N' 'bjections ter that."

Dave staggered over the deck like a caged beast. As if there were not "hubbub" enough indeed, the water had taken to changing and shifting colors—light-green trampling over black-blue, and black-blue bellowing over light-green. Suddenly his eye lit upon what he believed to be a half-familiar craft swaying at its anchor, and his frenzied and muddled brain leaped to a swift determination.

"Where ye goin' in the small boat, ye ol' sea-kag?" inquired a member of the crew, quite indifferently.

"Goin' ter row around here a little ter see ef I can git a glimpst o' a *man*," said Dave, with politic composure; "sick o' frolickin' with monkeys."

"A' right. Sense ye up a little ter work awhile."

Dave made his way among the freighted schooners and light craft to the yacht which had caught his eye, half hidden, some furlongs distant.

"Cap'n Saxe aboard?"

"Dr. Saxe aboard? Yes."

"Tell him Alpy Marlow's father wants ter see him."

At this information Norman Saxe rose hastily from his berth, dressed and came on deck.

"She's a' right, a' right, but she's in trouble," said Dave; "want ter talk with ye."

So he found himself seated opposite the great man in the warm cabin, an unnecessary tankard of something exhilarating before him to loosen his nebulous and fatherly tongue.

"Alpy—got a sad story ter tell ye."

"Where is she?"

Dave held up his hand. "Hol' on! Sad story. I been a wicked cuss," he blubbered; "but Dunbar's a dretful rich man, an' he promised ter make the world 'n' all of Alpy, 'n' then he never came 'board the boat 't all! Crew's mut'nied. Saxe, I want ter git her 'board here wi' you where she'll be safe."

"Do you mean that you have Alpena over there on Dunbar's boat?"

"I mean it."

Saxe arose without further word, and his own yacht was soon brought alongside the *Darien*. The astonished sailors shrank before this commanding presence, but augured no ill since Dave was seen lurching proudly and confidently at his side.

"Come on, Saxe. Here's the li'l gal. Poor li'l gal!"

Alpena, dressed as when she had entered the boat, half reclined on a lounge, her head laid on her old nurse's lap. She looked at Norman Saxe as surprised at nothing, nor even lifted her head.

"Poor child!" he said. "I want you to come with me, where you will be safely cared for and taken home."

"Very gladly," she said, in her sweet, low tone, though without any emotion of gratitude. She led the old housekeeper by the hand; she had ignored the companion provided by Dunbar as well as all his other provision for her comfort.

"Now, Saxe," said drunken Dave, "want ye to do the square thing. Li'l minister 'board here somewhere—want ye to marry Alpy."

"Man, I desire it above all things," replied Norman Saxe, with a look of anger and contempt at Dave, "but I'll take no advantage of the helpless—

HARL TRODDEN

understand! And if Miss Marlow could consent to run away with Tyrolese Dunbar she surely has no heart for any other suitor!"

"I did not run away with him," said Alpy, still in an unemotional monotone. "Father brought me down to the boat to give me some silk stuffs, and while we were looking at them the boat was set adrift."

"You hound!" said Saxe, turning on Dave.

"Set 'drift by mut'nous crew," said Dave, weeping. "Where's li'l minister?"

"He hired a cuss ter take him ashore while you was off in your dory visitin'," replied one of the edified onlookers.

At this happy information Dave winked and whispered aside to the speaker.

"Jonah gone, eh? Li'l Mist' Psalm-Book gone, eh? Click! Sh-h! We'll soon be red o' the whole kinnygarten. Then ef ary on 'em gits over f'om Bar, 'fore we kin sail, lookin' for thief, *we* ain't no thief, eh? *We* ain't got no gal nor no woman 'board, eh? Click!"

"Go ter bed," said the other. "Ye couldn't see the sun by daylight."

"Come, Alpy," said Saxe, and, both women following her, he assisted them into his own boat. "I cannot understand why that villain Dunbar, when he had trapped his prize, failed to claim her; unless the hand of the good Lord stayed him."

"'Twa'n't," suddenly piped up the voice of Everywhere, in eager explanation; "'twas my ol' Jack'-lantern with the forkin' tongue."

"Oh, Johnny," cried Alpena, embracing him with the first animation she had shown, "you are here, aren't you? I had forgotten all about you. Did Tyrolese really fall?"

FLOOD-TIDE

"I heern him tunk," said Johnny, in a tone of the dryest narrative.

"Perhaps he was killed!"

"He mus' 'a' been stunted anyway," said Johnny.

"Isn't Everywheres a quaint dear?" said Alpena, still with her arm round him.

"Very quaint," said Norman Saxe, with plain contempt for her taste in the bestowment of her affections.

"Say, boss," said the boy, complainingly, "when ye go'n' ter dish up mess?"

"Breakfast will be served in a few moments."

"When are you going to sail?" asked Alpena, with an impatience as confiding as Johnny's own.

"Not until the wind abates."

After breakfast the girl slept for the first time in twenty-four hours. "Don't go far away, Everywheres," she said. "I want to see you first thing when I wake."

Thus, instead of being regarded as the stowaway and culprit that he was, Johnny held a place of importance on the boat, and asked many questions with exacting firmness.

"Ye was makin' for the Bar when the gale come up an' hove ye in here, wa'n't ye, Saxe?"

"Yes."

"Ev'body knows ye ca'n't keep away from Alpy. Ye're sof' on her."

Norman Saxe made no answer, and Everywheres, regarding him, feasted on his sufferings with cannibal eyes. "But she ain't sof' on you."

When Alpena woke, the boat was bounding merrily on its way. Everywheres, curled in a big chair near her, was snoring. She leaned over him for a moment with an indulgent smile, then made her

HARL TRODDEN

way to the deck. She had taken no more pains with her toilet than as if she had forgotten vanity altogether, and she was but the more beautiful.

Norman Saxe noted every detail—where she stood gazing seaward, so indifferent to him—with a longing that was eaten of tenderness and despair: the brown gingham waist that would have looked crumpled and mean upon any other form, he thought, was nun-like and pathetic upon Alpy; the poor, coarse skirt flowing and graceful as a queen's; the brown-black hair waving disordered over the delicate ear; the sensuous red lip that disdained love; the awakened eyes, black as midnight, and shining with the light of inconstant dreams.

"You are shivering, and you do not know it, child," he said, approaching her and wrapping a rug about her.

She cherished herself, drawing the wrap closer with her thin hands, and smiled slightly without turning aside to him.

"Alpy," he was tempted to say, "it is I who have you in my power now. What if I should sail away to find some heaven on earth with you?"

The sombre eyes half closed with dangerous fires; still she did not speak nor turn to him.

"Ah, dearest, you know me better. I am taking you home. But speak a word of hope to me—just a word, Alpy. I love you. Oh, I love you!"

She turned to him then with a self-possession strange as it was alluring.

"I am very sorry—that you love me."

"Is that all?"

Something gross and well fed, even at that moment, in his pale, beseeching countenance, kind though it was, touched the sprite with a kind of

FLOOD-TIDE

physical repulsion. She drew away and laughed drearily.

"You are not human," said he. "You are incapable of love."

The brown gingham arms slowly let go the wrap, which caught at her shoulder and, trailing downward, made the tall form exceeding stately. Some solemn impulse came to the girl—solemn and prophetic—and vain no longer in that hour.

"I do love."

"Whom?"

"I love Harl Trodden. No one ever has loved me or will love me as he loves. He loves truly—like a—saint."

XXXIX

"KILLED BY A PUNKIN"



T is memorable at the Bar—the morning of the gale.

For now the tempest is king, and the lost hold carnival; their wailing puts all heaven to blight; their ghostly hands have sinews beyond mortal power, playing with the sailor's craft as with spent toys, stretching shoreward and tearing the trees from their long-time foundation, and hurling wrack to wrack.

But Captain Abram Shale looked from his window over and beyond and through all this, and the sun of peace was in his happy eyes.

"Aberm, ef I'd jest been rescued from the pit o' the grave, seems ter me I wouldn't set a-smilin' with no consarn at all on my countenance. Earle hisself 'd 'a' known better 'n ter go out ter haul traps this mornin'."

"The win' wa'n't so fierce when I went out, Sylphy, an', sech as it was, it kind o' tempted me—tell ye the truth, it kind o' tempted me."

"Common mornin's ye ain't in no hurry. I bet anythin'—ol' man as ye be—ye set out ter try ter git some wind o' Harl an' Arch. Ef the men hadn't got their boats over from South Harbor last night, an' went out this mornin' an' hitched their dories

FLOOD-TIDE

tergether an' towed ye in, ye'd never come ashore. Belmore says, as near as he could calk'late, ye was makin' out o' harbor like a old sprawl-kneed colt; an' once out, he says, ye'd never 'a' got back."

"Ef somebody 'd pay you for talkin', mother, we could go down to New York an' put up a tenement."

"They don't have tenements there; they have brown-stun fronts."

"A brown-stun front is nothin' but a tenement, mother."

"True, Aberm," and Aunt Sylphy broke into monitory song:

" 'An' nightly petch my movin' tent
A day's march nearer home—nearer home,
An' nightly petch—' "

"Come in, Bayruck. Why, you sartin do look as ef you had good rights to sue the elements for 'sault an' battery!"

"Cap'n Abe," said Bayruck, sitting down and leaning forward with his hands on his knees, while his bright, dark eyes studied the old man's imperturbable face, "what do ye make o' all this business? Dunbar never sailed!"

"Didn't sail, eh?" said Captain Shale, his faded, omniscient eye calmly measuring the tumult outside.

"No. We found him stunted down to the bottom o' the clifts to the Narrows."

"Shol!"

"We carried him over to his own house as ef he'd been a log. The doctor says he'll come to in time, but so fur as gittin' any news out er him now, he lays there deaf an' dumb as a haddick."

“KILLED BY A PUNKIN”

“Sho!”

“Aberm Shale, here’s Bayruck tellin’ you the greatest news ’t ever was, an’ you can’t say nothin’ but ‘sho! sho!’ as ef you was settin’ down ter milk the cow.”

“I’ve allas found, mother,” said Captain Abe, with extreme mildness, “that when ary body had news ter tell me, I got more of it by settin’ an’ listenin’ than by keepin’ up some clack o’ my own.”

“I don’t understand,” said Bayruck, intently facing the captain in the same attitude. “Ef Dunbar got his plans all made so slick ter carry off Alpy, then how did he come—sech a sly, cute fox as he is—how in—”

“Bayruck,” interposed Aunt Sylphy, “I’m nothin’ but an advent, I know, and you’ve jinded the saints, but even them is supposed to ’a’ put blasphemiousness ahind their backs.”

Bayruck blushed and went on: “How under the canopy did he come to be a-layin’ there stunted to the Narrows? An’, Dave, ’t couldn’t ’a’ been nothin’ but his tool, puttin’ out from harbor without him?”

“Sartin’,” said Captain Abe—“it’s perplexin’.”

“Harl an’ Arch didn’t smell his trick nor work him no ill, for they was jindin’ in the music over to Dorna’s, an’ the minute they heered they put out hot-headed in the *Old Bum*. Cap’n Abe—Cap’n Abe,” said Bayruck, in a low voice, “I’m thinkin’, ary minute, about them boys.”

Captain Abram’s eyes fell, and his mouth twitched; he did not speak.

“The’s one good featur’ to it,” continued Bayruck—“Mis’ Bratt went along o’ Alpy. ’T least, the’ ain’t no sign of her ter be found anywhere. She must ’a’ went along.”

"I'm dretful glad o' that." Then Captain Abe added, in a clear, hopeful voice:

"Where's Everywheres?"

"The's another thing—he's gone, too."

"Everywheres gone?"

"He's gone, too."

"Sho!"

"An', what's cur'ous, we found his tracks up on the banks 'longside o' Dunbar's, found them little, twinklin', sprawlin', barefoot tracks o' his'n."

"Sho!"

"An' his old Jack-'lantern, 't he's allas hidin' away in one place an' another, tucked away in the split o' the rock."

"Sho!" Captain Abram thought a moment and then said: "Poor Tyr'lese. Sev'ral millions o' dollars, an' a baroosh ter ride in, an' a sailin' vessel, an' a wiry young body, an' a cunnin' head."

"Yes."

"Poor creetur'—an' killed by a punkin!"

"What d'ye mean?"

"Reckon Johnny got on to his scheme; reckon he popped out at him suddent in the dark with that ol' scarecrow all ablaze; reckon Tyr'lese sprang an' tiptled off; reckon Johnny run an' got aboard the vessel."

"But why did they sail without him?"

"Dave skeered as a runaway hoss; run jest for the sake o' runnin'. Ye know Dave."

"Yes, I know Dave." Bayruck's eyes kindled, and he drew nearer and spoke lower. "The's more to it yet. When we found Dunbar lyin' there, the' was somethin' he must 'a' been a-huggin' in his hand afore he fell, for it was clenched as tight as death. The' was this 'ere paper, faded an' yaller,

“KILLED BY A PUNKIN”

but it tells a story. I been examinin' it. Cap'n Abe, Alpy wa'n't Marlow's child. He picked her up off'n a wrack at sea, an' he allas kep' the paper secret. Alpy Marlow's o' a grand fam'ly an' prob'ly the heir to wealth, an' her name's Templeton, an', accordin' to my notion, your boarder in there is her mother.”

“Sho!”

“Aberm Shale,” said Aunt Sylphy, who had been leaning forward breathlessly, “can't you do nothin' but milk your ol' cow at hearin' such news as them?”

“Temple—Templeton,” ruminated Captain Shale. “Her own child? She allas kind o' sensed it. Bay-ruck women an' birds has instinc's, an' the' ain't no compass nor no plummet line 't finds the way home as their instinc's does. I can't say no more 'bout 'em, for I don't understan' no more, but I'd trust 'em when all philosophy an' reason was ag'in' 'em. You mark my eternal words—they knows the way home.”

“It 'll break her heart! It 'll break her heart!” cried Aunt Sylphy. “So near to findin' her. an' then losin' her afresh. She's half killed at Alpy's takin'-off a'ready, an' when ye give 'er the proofs 't she is her child, it 'll kill her, losin' the girl.”

“Sho!”

“You'd milk through the last trump an' the jedgment-day, Aberm,” said Mrs. Shale, indignantly.

“Infra's in there with her now, ain't she?” was Captain Abe's calm reply.

“Yes.”

“Infra 'll tell her. Reckon Alpy 'll come back all right. You give the news to Infra, mother, an' let her tell her.”

XL

BY THE SHORE



F all the folks 't Infra's comfo'ted in their sorrers was got tergether," said Captain Shale, "it 'u'd make a string longer 'n any sail-loft."

He saw that the tempest and its unrest were in my soul, and he sought to divert me.

"Patience gets all it's waitin' for, an' more, Alfred. Remember how the Lord told Jonah 't Nineveh sh'd be destriyed in forty days? Forty days come an' she wa'n't destriyed. Jonah went out an' set down—don't remember jest what he set down on"—the captain leisurely crossed one moss-rose foot over the other—"but he set down thereabouts on somethin', an' wisht 't he was dead; an' the Lord caused a most amazin' vine ter spring up ter comfort him—don' know jest what kind of a vine 'twas—somethin' in the natur' of a cucumber or watermelon vine likely." Luscious reminiscences caused him to lift his mighty stature to its benignant height.

"Le's go out an' git a turnip."

It was now sunset, and the wind had much abated. No mortal could see and hear Captain Abe as he ate a raw turnip without himself eating to his own mysterious soothing and refreshment.

"Sylphy says I ain't sorrerful enough"—his faded

BY THE SHORE

eyes with their infinitely quiet knowledge of storm and wreck turned to the sunset, where flaunted the gold and purple triumph as of a great army with banners. One could almost hear the trumpets!

"I'm sorrerful enough, Alfred, an' yet I'm happier, too, than ary child let out for a play-day. I reckon it's only a step to the onravellin o' all these mysteries, 'n' 't God's keepin' for us ev'ry thing 't we call lost. I can't think no other way, fur I know it so ter be."

I knew it, too, as I stood there beside him. "It is a little while, here," I gasped, "and we do seem to find by losing, and to gain by giving up."

"Ay, Alfred. Harlan—he giv' up hisself long ago, and the lad's countenance changed. Infra—she's giv' up, an' she messmerizes folks. Now most women they try to messmerize ye ter hanker after *them*, but Infra—she messmerizes folks inter the strength o' self-denial an' the—the"—Captain Abe's eyes dwelt far away where the tumult of the sky was melting into amber fields and a beckoning forest of rest with a river flowing thereby—"the peace that passeth understandin'."

"But I—I love her, captain—my sweet wife. I cannot for an hour forget her."

"Sartin. An' ye won't never lose her," he smiled. "Le's go down tow'ds the beach, where the folks is."

In the surcease of the gale, and reflecting the sky's last glow, the waves came breaking on the shore with heedless, jubilant power; then came one above all the others, rearing its crest of light and running with the joy of all things that excel.

"'Minds me o' the sperrit o' Harl an' Arch," said Captain Abe. I looked at him. His countenance, too, had changed; he was very pale, but he smiled withal.

FLOOD-TIDE

The Bar was holding its convocation here, thinly clothed as usual, drinking in the salt wind as from the breast of a nourishing mother, and looking seaward for some returning craft.

"Ef the boys is lost," said Aunt Sylphy, "and it's found 't Dunbar giv' those orders about the boats, he's liable to git another tunk, in my opinion, when he comes to hisself out er this one."

"No, I guess he won't," said Uncle Abe.

"You'd run a purty firm'ment," replied his wife, "lettin' all yer injuries go, an' forgivin' to the last turn o' the crank, an' sayin' how it don't do nobody ary good to lose all their hope. Pooh!"

"It don't do the glorified no good ter see ary poor, malformed worm groun' inter the dust. Ye don't kill a good bein' by killin' the body—ye don't tetch 'em; nor ye don't kill a evil bein' by killin' the body. When ye've turned the evil inter good, then ye've killt it."

"I'm a-talkin' o' substantial substernces, Aberm Shale."

"Mother—mother," smiled the captain, "the substantial substernces ain't in this dyin' body; they let that go without ary whimper when the time comes, knowin' 't they'll be instant new clothed upon."

"Instant? Instant?" said Grandpa Gleeson, cocking his head cannily; "don't ye know, cap'n, 't ye got ter lay committed ter the dust till a time an' a time—"

"Pa Gleeson," interrupted Dorna, with something of the old fire, "you're a advent an' a soul-sleeper, an' Uncle Abe's a saint, but what he's a-tryin' ter knock inter your skull is jest the simple gospel accordin' to Chris' Jesus."

BY THE SHORE

Mrs. Temple—unlike the Bar, in warm raiment—leaning wearily against a bowlder, smiled sympathetically with a reflection of the old brightness. Dorna's lip had trembled through her bold championship, for her heart spoke of the little sailing captain, still with craft enough, still sailing somewhere in God's stars.

"Mis' Temple—Lady Templeton," continued Dorna, earnestly, "even ef your child's sailed as fur as mine, we'll find 'em—in a little while. My bearin's p'int to the same shore as Uncle Abe's."

"Ef Everywheres got aboard the vessel where Alpy was," said Tilly, seriously, "I don't believe 'twas lost. Somehow I got a sartin sure conviction 't Everywheres wa'n't born to be drowned."

"What makes you think that?" said Mrs. Temple, eagerly.

"It ain't so much a thought," answered Tilly, "as a kind o' knowledge."

"You saints has a dretful amount o' knowledge," declared Aunt Sylphy, cheerfully. "I don't know why Everywheres shouldn't smell the bottom o' the ocean as well as other folks."

Grandma Gleeson had on a new pink wrapper; the breeze fluttered its flowing skirt and showed the striped stockings that a rusticater had given her. She blushed through the healthy rose of her skin, knowing that she was beautiful, yet was she loved of all.

"I wish 't we could *all* be saints here in this hour," she said. "Why can't we *all* be saints?"

"Vanity becometh not saints," chirped Grandpa Gleeson, "and you, ma, are as vain a creatur' as that scarlet wom—"

"She ain't no vainer 'n you be," retorted Tilly, "allas reelin' off your old pentatukal knowledge."

FLOOD-TIDE

"I suppose we all got idols," admitted Aunt Sylphy.

"Yes," said the keen Tilly. "Yours, Aunt Sylphy, is keepin' ev'ry speck o' dirt off'n your kitchen floor."

"We all know 't you bow down an' worship your pansy-bed, Tilly," replied Aunt Sylphy.

Allusions to mundane personal gods were waxing warm, when Dorna turned the drift with a clear, heart-broken sigh.

"'T seems forty years ago," she said, "sence them days when we all set on our pails in the lane burrin' gooseberries."

Dorna's handsome face bore a look of tragedy. She had shown a wild zeal for fishing since Dinsmore's death—fishing in all weathers, in fog and chill, with throat open to the wind, and a disk of a hat hung by one fanning-string.

"Ye're as good at herrin'in' or pollockin' as ary o' the men folks, Dorny," said Grandma Gleeson, tenderly. "I hear ye got thirty barrels."

"She's better 'n them rusticater men 't went fishin' over in the cove," averred Tilly. "They took down sail an' anchored as ef they was in big water. Nothin' but one old hake ever comes in there anyway, an' he was gone visitin' that day. They lef' their dinner-pail down by the shore, an' the tide come an' took it out, an' Bayruck claims 't he captured it off Swan Island, with the cover firm on, an' ev'ry sandwich dry."

"I wish 't somebody 'd listen! They say 't Nudd's made fifty dollars this season supplyin' hake-sounds for one o' the mixin's to a fash'nable candy factory off to New York."

"That's meaner business 'n fryin' porpoises ter

BY THE SHORE

git the oil. When I can't live by straight out-'n'-out fishin', I'll give up."

"I'd die ef it wa'n't for the water," said Dorna, with trembling lip. Mrs. Temple took her hand in her own.

"We ought to 'a' sailed over to Beel Island for a conference," said Aunt Sylphy; "then things might 'a' been allowed to go smoothen here to the Bar. But we was all makin' excuses an' stayin' to home, jest because our shoes wa'n't peaked and stylish enough," she added, looking down reproachfully at the expansive moss-roses encircling the captain's feet.

"I didn't stay home on account o' my shoes, mother. I don't suppose the gulls 'u'd care what kind o' foot-gear I had on, an' they're the only 'nhabitants. Let the gulls have the conference; they're glad enough ter flock there through a hurlicane. We shall list into port without no conference jest the same, along o' the other castaways. We're all castaways when it comes to makin' port at last, mother."

"I don't wonder 't you consider yourself one, Abern, for you've allas neglected the assemblin' of ourselves tergether."

"What prophetship do you call that, Aunt Sylphy?" demanded Grandma Gleeson, fervently. "I'm sure the Bar is usually huddled tergether in a bunch somewheres; jest as now, for insternce, ain't we all standin' here in a mess prayin' God for home-comin' sails? Le's leave all our argyments an' sing a waft. Where's Infra?"

"She went home. She was very tired. She took my sorrow on herself," murmured Mrs. Temple, with tears.

"Le's sing a waft," repeated Grandma Gleeson,

FLOOD-TIDE

and the song arose plaintively there in the fading light:

"'Tis but a night of sorrow,
'Tis but a day of weeping,
An' we shall see the harbor lights
That God for us is keeping."

"There's Saxe's boat," cried Bayruck. They saw the white sails spread dovelike on the dim water.

"It ain't the boat we wanted," sighed Aunt Sylphy.

"He may have news," said Grandma Gleeson.

"He's makin' for his old anchorage. Mebby ther' ain't no news an' he'll row for the Reach. Le's row out to meet him."

Captain Shale was already making for his dory, and the vigor of youth was renewed in his mighty arms as he rowed towards the incoming yacht.

"Is it—is it—it's *Alpy* Cap'n Shale's takin' into his boat!"

"It's *Alpy*! It's *Alpy*!" went from lip to lip.

Mrs. Temple leaned against the mother of the little sailing captain. Dorna upheld her with strong arms, and joy in another's joy shone on her white, still face.

"*Alpy*," said Captain Shale, as he rowed shoreward, "our boarder there is your mother, *Alpy*—yer own mother—an' it's proved. She's a great lady, too, but that ain't nothin'—she's yer mother, an' she's suffered, *Alpy*."

"So have I," said *Alpy*, sweetly. "I have suffered very much."

Captain Shale sighed and choked. "Don't ever think much o' that, *Alpy*. Think o' her! Think o' her!"

Alpena, in the simple brown cotton waist, with an

BY THE SHORE

ever-inherited majesty in her erect black head, looked towards the shore with wide eyes. Homeless, wearied, distressed, the yearning woman-love and the sweet earthly fortune awaiting her drove for the hour all other memories from her breast.

As they landed, the tall beauty stepped towards the arms waiting for her with a tragedy of love and longing in her black eyes. But the girl was strong; the woman fell forward and for joy fainted in her arms.

An eager group gathered round a barefooted, shock-headed boy, who answered their questions as a matter of fact, without emotion, as mechanical a transmitter of news as the ticking wire.

"Did ye see anything o' Harl an' Arch, Everywheres?"

"Did they put out?"

"Yes."

"What in?"

"The *Old Bum*."

"Then they heered the Beel Islanders singin', for Dave trapped her."

A bellow of anger arose, and then wailing.

"Hush!" said Captain Shale, and the stars were coming out in great peace after the tempest; "they ain't discomfo'ted."

"It was the way—they was—to go," said Grandma Gleeson, with streaming, uplifted eyes.

"But we want Dave. Where's Dave?" some one asked sullenly of Mrs. Bratt.

"He's bearin' away, no doubt," she answered, grimly; "he'll never set foot to the Bar again. But the' was a cuter one than he to the bottom o' all this."

"The next tunk Dunbar gits," said a mariner,

FLOOD-TIDE

with a clenched, foreboding hand, "he won't come out of."

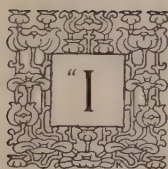
"Ye go'n' to fight the devil with his own sperrit an' his own tools?" said Captain Shale. "An' mebby he knew nothin' 'bout trappin' the *Old Bum*. May 'a' been Dave's own fool-work to spile her when he was quittin' of her for good 'n' all. For me, I pity Tyr'lese' little measly life. I can't find no pity for Harl an' Arch, fearin' nothin' an' givin' themselves for others, for sech as that can't die; an' what do they need o' pity?"

"Mebby they made some island," whispered Grandma Gleeson.

"They made the mainland, I reckon," said Captain Shale, with a smile, solemnly; "an' for us 't's only waitin' the orders to launch out. Here's hopin'!"

XLI

HOPING



AM ill," Infra said to me, with a smile, "as Margaret was ill."

She was ill, as Margaret was ill.

That was dark, and without love of God, to me—her going and the child's.

It was not dark to her. "There is no light," I cried. "But keep the faith," she said, her hand on mine—"in darkness, keep the faith."

I kept the faith, in darkness—far from the Bar. "Here is of my substance," I said to the needy; "Here is of my life," I said to the sick; but never, "*Here is hoping!*"

But by-and-by Infra came and stepped softly at my side over sorrowful thresholds, and stood beside me at weary bedsides; the sweetness of her presence and the great health of her countenance mocked lovingly my dark despair. I heard her voice swelling once more above the billows of pain and woe, as though these were but for a little while. Then the heart broke in me, and I lifted my eyes and gave the rest of the message, "Here is hoping! Here is hoping!"

Therefore it grew light. And now, old and bowed and poor, I find this is the most welcome message of all from lip and eye and springing heart, "I give you hoping, friend! I give you great hoping!"

FLOOD-TIDE

Those who have failed need comfort ; but the successful, they need it more.

Margaret Dunbar—for Margaret married Tyrolese long ago—is among the wealth-crowned and envied of the city ; her exclusive fêtes, her chaste régime of elegance in every form ; her son, tall and graceful as herself, forsaking the excesses of his father, and distinguished already as a young financier of shrewd brain and cautious heart. What could she wish for more?

I doubt if Margaret knows me when her chariot wheels pass me, walking on the dusty street. But I see her, Tyrolese sometimes sitting, bleared and half-palsied, at her side, making the better foil for her patrician manner. I see the gaze of those beautiful, weary, famished eyes, and the admission of life's bitterness and failure that no art of the *mas-seuse* can drive from her handsome face.

She lost, as do all players, life being not a game for the chance throw of the dice or the skilful holding of much in pawn. Not that.

Once there were with her the guests of a day, the sight of whom made my heart leap with untold memories. Alpena, in the two lives you have lived, as Alpy Marlow at the Bar, and now with another name, as one of the most flattered and favored of an old aristocracy—where does your heart most lie? The sweet woman beside her, Mrs. Temple, as we knew her, had her hand on hers ; she goes through life adoring her, petting all her whims, excusing all her follies, loving with the mother passion foiled by so many empty years ; and Alpy accepts the devotion loftily, sweetly.

She has never married—who was our beauty of the Bar—though it has sometimes been announced

HOPING

in select circles that she would marry, and she has entertained certain high proposals with Madonna-like thoughtfulness for a little while—no longer.

I searched her face—she not regarding me on the common street. I saw again the small black head so queenly poised, the perfect features yet tender with human sensuousness. The black eyes had kept their mad dreams.

Almost, there at the entrance of a fashionable park, looking into its glittering vista of elaborate and formal equipage, herself gowned in velvet and sable, one might have said those strange eyes saw haughtily for themselves instead the night of a tempest-swept sea, and a wrestler there with swart face, with eyes of light and hair of light, a high priest shining in a carnival of darkness. Her lips grow cold and sad.

“There was one who loved me once,” those lips murmur sometimes, “who knew how to love truly: yes—a fisherman.” Her eyes smite the adorer with the far light of a sweet, dispassionate dream. But she has no faith for present needs, and the smile on her lips grows drearier. One would think she, too, had lost, at whose feet lies so much of the world.

It may be, then, that *they* were wise—those saints of the Bar—to love and fear not.

If, as some believe, the Peasant of Galilee was the keenest sage, the wisest political economist, the greatest of practical philosophers, then they, too, were wise. For the world serves well him who uses it as a camping-ground on a longer, lordlier journey, and fools him who gets together his sacks of gold and builds around them and his fearful soul a stone wall as for eternity! Swift and greatly is he fooled.

They were wise—the saints of the Bar—who guessed by simple intuition that nature is not sorrow,

FLOOD-TIDE

and followed Him who was a God for hoping ; who, seemingly mocked of all His high assertions and gasping in the pains of an accursed death, even then, with sublime and kingly confidence, hailed a repentant thief to the glory of His Father's paradise.

But cities crumble, and the despairing heart of the world sees its recognized successes fall, its myriad inventions whirl their weary round in the mocking face of death, and, after all, He alone triumphs—the crucified Boaster—the Failure with torn breast—the infinite Hoper!

He spoke true—He *is* a king—He *doth* prevail—His Father's fields are sweet in paradise, and hoping is but wisdom, and the faith of the child shall meet with no irony from God.

I know that it is summer weather at the Bar, the pines breathe balsam along its shore, its waves whisper to the sentient sky a joyful secret for all its winter, all its wreck.

And some have said farewell peacefully by the shore. Captain Shale went long ago. The parting of the rusty cable was no affright or mystery to him ; his countenance had changed.

And some have heard the Beel Islanders sing to the pealing of that organ that awes so sweetly the straining ear of death.

As for the conference, the sea-gulls have it ; there by the lashing waves and the wild, dark green of the overhanging pines, they have their conference.

Now sometimes in my dreams I sail again with Dorna and Dinsmore ; the salt wind smites my face, care-free, and the hearts I love wait for me at the Bar.

HOPING

“Look to your sail!” I hear that fearless woman cry; “she’s worryin’ to ketch this puff! A fair wind and your sail flat aft! Look to your sail!”

So I am spreading ever my worn canvas to catch the breeze, and for me it is growing young flood-tide again, and the hearts I love wait for me at the Bar; and here is hoping. I give you the Bar word—
“Here is hoping!”

THE END

Greene, Mrs. Sarah P.

AUTHOR

Flood-tide

TITLE

DATE DUE

BORROWER'S NAME

Greene

96455



05385608

812 46 68126

1946



4